

S E R M O N S

T O

YOUNG WOMEN,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY JAMES FORDYCE, D.D.

VOLUME I.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

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P R E F A C E.

THE corruption of the age is a complaint with many men who contribute to increase it. In like manner, the inattention of the people is a complaint with many preachers who are themselves to blame. A dull discourse naturally produces a listless audience; there being few hearers who will attend to that by which their hearts are not engaged, or their imaginations entertained. To entertain the imagination principally, were a poor, and indeed a vicious aim in a preacher. To engage the heart, with a view to mend it, should be his grand ambition. Any farther than as it may prove some way or other subservient to that, entertainment should never be admitted into a Sermon. There, to say the truth, we seldom meet with too much of the

latter. Would to God we often met there with more of the former !

The author of the following Discourses was prompted to publish them, from an unfeigned regard for the Female Sex ; from a fervent zeal for the best interests of society, on which he believes their dispositions and deportment will ever have a mighty influence ; and, lastly, from a secret desire long felt of trying whether that style of preaching, which to him appears, upon the whole, adapted to an auditory above the vulgar rank, might succeed on a subject of this nature ; nothing in the kind, that he knows of, having been endeavoured before, in any language. The attempt was as difficult as it was new, and this very difficulty was probably the cause of its having been hitherto declined. He relied however on the candour of the public for every proper allowance, more especially respecting some singularities in the mode

of composition, upon which he would not have ventured but for the uncommonness of the occasion. Nor has he been disappointed. But the public has not shown candour only : it has even exercised indulgence ; persons of both sexes, of various denominations, and of different tastes, having joined in expressing the most generous approbation.

Their very favourable opinion, so far beyond his expectation, affords him peculiar pleasure, as it raises his hopes, that what is here suggested may, by the blessing of Heaven, which he humbly implores, contribute to the improvement of the most agreeable part of the creation, and by consequence both to their own felicity, and that of millions with whom they are now, or may be hereafter, connected. In this case, it will add to his happiness to reflect, that he has rendered the plain voice of Truth acceptable

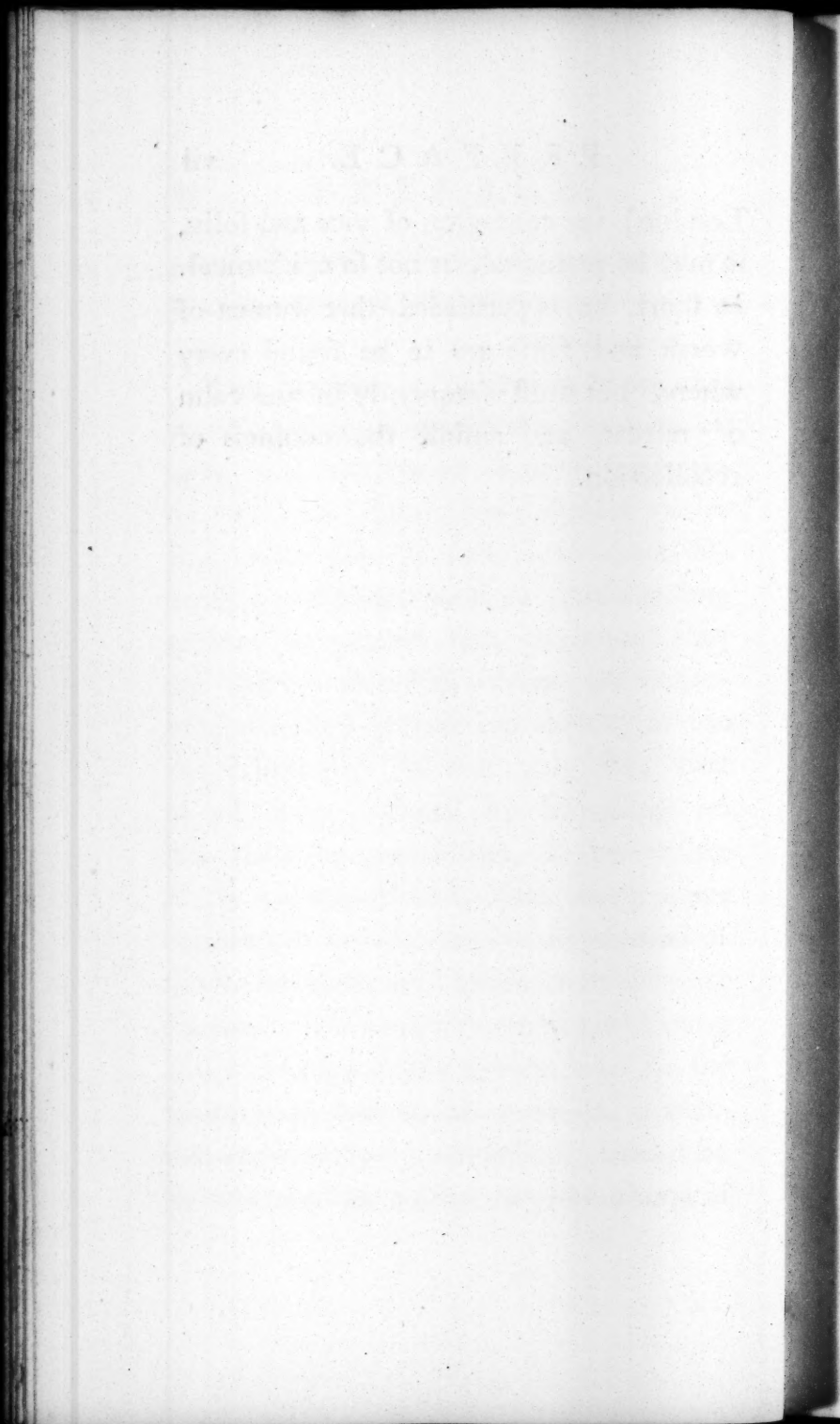
amongst those who are daily tempted by the firen-song of Flattery.

The preacher is willing to hope, that women of most conditions, and at all ages, may meet with some useful counsel, or some salutary hint, should curiosity incite them to look into these discourses. Should any of those young persons in genteel life, to whom they are chiefly addressed, deem the reprehensions they contain too severe, or too indiscriminate; he can only say, that as all were dictated by friendship no less than by conviction, so he wishes it to be understood, that many were occasioned by a particular observation of those characters and manners which are esteemed fashionable amongst the Young and the Gay of this metropolis. In the Country (a denomination which, as matters are commonly conducted, he can by no means allow to the neighbourhood of

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London) the contagion of vice and folly, it may be presumed, is not so epidemical. In short, he is persuaded, that women of worth and sense are to be found every where, but most frequently in the calm of retreat, and amidst the coolness of recollection.



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OF THE

FIRST VOLUME.

S E R M O N I.

On the Importance of the Female Sex,
especially the Younger Part.

I. TIM. ii. 8, 9, 10.

I will—that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Page 3

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I will—that women adorn themselves in Modest Apparel.

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1. TIM. ii. 8, 9.

*I will—that women adorn themselves with
Sobriety.*

PROV. xxxi. 10, 31.

*Who can find a Virtuous Woman? For her price
is far above rubies.—Give her of the fruit
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in the gates.*

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On Female Virtue, with Intellectual
Accomplishments.

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*I will—that women adorn themselves with
Sobriety.*

PROV. iv. 5, 6, 8, 9.

*Get Wisdom, get Understanding.—Forsake her
not, and she shall preserve thee: love her,
and she shall keep thee.—Exalt her, and she
shall promote thee.—She shall give to thine head
an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall
she deliver to thee.*

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S E R M O N I.

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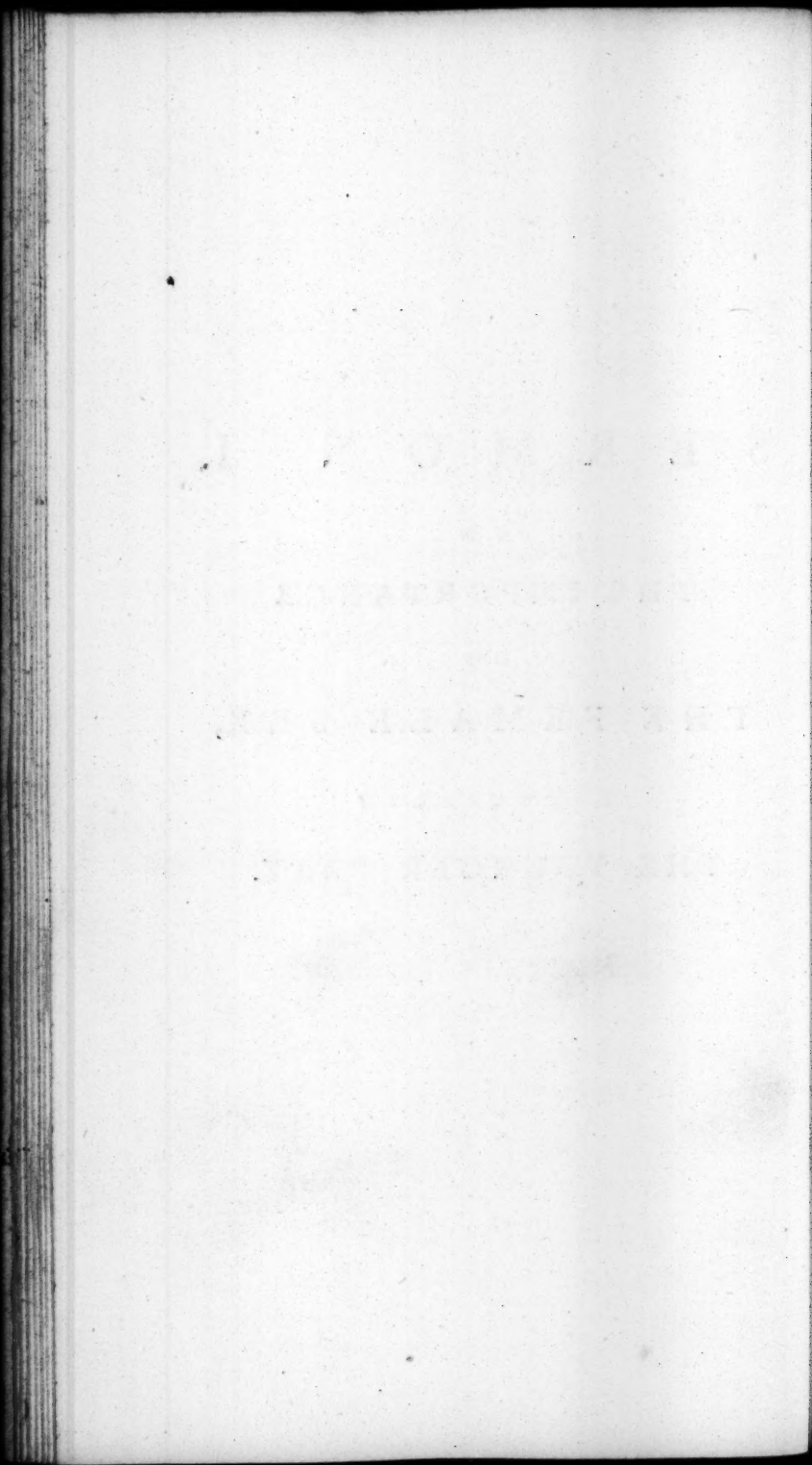
T H E I M P O R T A N C E

O F

T H E F E M A L E S E X,

E S P E C I A L L Y

T H E Y O U N G E R P A R T.



S E R M O N I.

On the Importance of the Female Sex,
especially the Younger Part.

1. TIM. ii. 8, 9, 10.

*I will—that women adorn themselves in
modest apparel, with shamefacedness and
sobriety; not with brodered hair, or gold,
or pearls, or costly array, but (which
becometh women professing godliness) with
good works.*

“CAN a maid forget her ornaments,
“ or a bride her attire?” is the
Almighty’s question by the mouth of a
prophet. Splendid attire and rich orna-
ments are in many places of scripture
spoken of without censure, and in some
with approbation. “The king’s daugh-
“ ter,” says the psalmist, “is all glo-
“ rious within:” he adds, “her clo-

“ thing is of wrought gold ; she shall
“ be brought unto the king in raiment
“ of needle-work.” The Virtuous Woman is in the Proverbs applauded for
“ clothing her household with scarlet,
“ and herself with silk and purple.” The Creator has poured unbounded beauty over his works. Witness the flowers of the field, celebrated by our Saviour himself ; witness the gems of the mine, mentioned in the Revelation of St. John, as employed to give additional lustre even to the New Jerusalem ; witness, in general, all that wonderful colouring, and those fair proportions, that please the eye, and amuse the imagination, with endless variety. Who can resist, who indeed ought to resist, the agreeable effect ? Surely the Author of Nature does nothing in vain. He surely meant, that by beholding her with delight we might be led to copy her with care, and from contemplating the inferior orders of beauty rise to the admiration of that which is supreme.

As he has furnished infinite materials for the exercise and entertainment, no less than for the provision and accommodation of man; so has he inspired that genius, and supplied those powers, by which they are moulded into form, and heightened into splendor. In saying this we are warranted by revelation itself, where we are expressly told, that “ the
“ spirit of the Lord filled Bezaleel, Aho-
“ liab,” and others, “ with wisdom, and
“ understanding, and knowledge, to de-
“ vise and work all manner of curious
“ and cunning works of the carver of
“ wood, the cutter of stones, the jeweller,
“ the engraver, the weaver, the embroi-
“ derer in blue and in purple, in scarlet
“ and in fine linen.” What multitudes are daily employed and comfortably supported by these and such like ornamental arts, hardly any one is ignorant.

That works of ingenuity and elegance are particularly becoming in your sex,

and that the study of them ought to enter into female education as much as possible, all, I think, are agreed. In fine, none but the most contracted, or the most prejudiced, will deny that women may avail themselves of every decent attraction, that can lead to a state for which they were manifestly formed; and that, should they by any neglect of their persons render themselves less amiable than God has made them, they would so far disappoint the design of their creation.

These considerations will, I apprehend, be thought more than sufficient to prove, that the passage of St. Paul which I have selected for my text is not to be understood strictly and absolutely, where it seems to condemn female ornament in general. It was common with the Hebrews to express comparative precepts in a positive manner, as might be shown from a number of texts. But you are not disposed to doubt it. What then is our

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apostle's meaning? ‘ I would exhort,
 ‘ and even enjoin christian women, al-
 ‘ ways to dress with decency and mode-
 ‘ ration; never to go beyond their cir-
 ‘ cumstances, nor aspire above their sta-
 ‘ tion, so as to preclude or hinder works
 ‘ of mercy; not to value themselves on
 ‘ their dress, or despise others more
 ‘ meanly habited; in short, never to
 ‘ spend too much time or thought on the
 ‘ embellishment of the body, but always
 ‘ to prefer the graces of the mind, mo-
 ‘ desty, meekness, prudence, piety, with
 ‘ all virtuous and charitable occupations,
 ‘ all beautiful and useful accomplish-
 ‘ ments suited to their rank and condi-
 ‘ tion. These are the chief ornaments of
 ‘ their sex; these will render them truly
 ‘ lovely as Women; and as Christians,
 ‘ these will more peculiarly become them.’
 Such, I conceive, is the doctrine of this
 divine writer, and of his fellow apostle
 St. Peter on the same subject; and such,
 in substance, was the doctrine of some of

the wisest heathens. Give me leave to quote one of them: "It is not gold, nor emeralds, nor purple, but modesty, gravity, and decent deportment, that can truly adorn a woman." Ah, my fair friends, how attractive and how happy might all of you be, were you effectually persuaded to form yourselves on such maxims; and what singular pleasure would it afford the preacher, if by the blessing of God he might so persuade you!

Princes, it has been said, and young women, seldom hear truth. It is a melancholy consideration. Flattery you have often heard, and sometimes, I doubt not, listened to. May He hope for your attention, whose character forbids him to flatter, and whose principles are equally averse to it? Nothing, I am convinced, can be more pernicious to your best interests, than the adulation with which you are so early and so generally entertained. You will not look for it

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here. But be not afraid, on the other hand, of the bitterness of reproach, or the bluntness of incivility. If any thing should appear harsh, be assured it proceeds from real regard. We would not willingly offend, we are naturally solicitous to please you; but we dare not promote your pleasure at the expence of your improvement. To tenderness and respect you are entitled: but certainly faithful and candid admonition is not incompatible with the latter; and of the former, if I be not mistaken, it is the truest proof.

The Almighty has thrown you upon the protection of our sex. To yours we are indebted on many accounts. He that abuses you dishonours his mother. Virtuous women are the sweetners, the charm of human life. “A Virtuous Woman—her price is far above rubies.” This is not flattery; it is just praise: and that every one of you may deserve such commendation, is my earnest prayer,

Much, I am sure, depends on you. And this shall be my First Point ; to which I will devote the present discourse, as a proper foundation for what is to follow. That I thus address you in particular, is principally owing to the idea I have formed of your consequence.

He that depreciates your sex is as unkind to society, as he is unjust to you. Yet to do so in your absence is, I am sorry to say, too common with many men ; with those very men that soothe you to your faces, and are dupes to your smiles. Is this either manly or fair ? Because there are foolish and vicious women, does it follow that there are hardly any other ? Were such an opinion to prevail generally, what would become of human kind ? Were so ungracious a system once established, is there not reason to fear, it would soon grow to be too well founded ? The world, we know, is mightily influenced by reputation. Applause incites and

animates ; contempt has the contrary effect. A concern for character is, from their constitution, education, and circumstances, particularly strong in women ; in all but those who, having lost their native honours, have with them lost their sense of shame ; an infamy to which they would have hardly descended, had they not first sunk in their own estimation.

That admired maxim of heathen antiquity, " Reverence thyself," seems to me peculiarly proper for a woman. She that does not reverence herself must not hope to be respected by others. I would therefore remind you of your own value. By encouraging you to entertain a just esteem for yourselves, I would on one hand guard you against every thing degrading, and on the other awaken your ambition to act up to the best standard of your sex ; to aspire at every amiable, every noble quality that is adapted to your state, or that can insure the affection and pre-

serve the importance to which you were born. Now this importance is very great, whether we consider you in your present single condition, or as afterwards connected in wedlock.

Considering you in your present Single condition, I would begin where your duty in society begins, by putting you in mind how deeply your Parents are interested in your behaviour. For the sake of the argument, I suppose your parents to be alive. Those that have had the misfortune to be early deprived of theirs, are commonly left to the care of some friend or guardian, who is understood to supply their place; and to such my remarks on this head will not be altogether inapplicable. But I must likewise suppose that your parents deserve the name, that they are really concerned for your virtue and welfare.—Great God! are there then any of thy creatures so unnatural, as to neglect the culture and happiness of the

children thou hast given them? Yes, and worse than to neglect it. “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this!” There are beings called Parents, and Christian parents, who are at pains to introduce their unexperienced offspring to folly, to vice, to every practice that can plunge them in misery!—What, Mothers too, and mothers “professing godliness!” Is it possible that They can train up the fruit of their womb, their own daughters, to dishonour and destruction? Alas! it is done every day, and passes unregarded. There is not perhaps in the whole science of female vanity, female luxury, or female falshood, a single article that is not taught, and also exemplified, by those Christian Mothers, to the poor young creatures whom every dictate of nature, as well as every principle of the gospel, should engage their parents to bring up in modesty, sobriety, and simplicity of manners. What words can paint the guilt of such a conduct?

Are you who now hear me blest with parents that even in these times, and in this metropolis, where all the corruption and futility of these times are concentrated, discover a zeal for your improvement and salvation? How thankful should you be for the mighty blessing! Would you show that you are thankful? Do nothing to make them unhappy; do all in your power to give them delight. Ah, did you but know how much it is in your power to give them!——But who can describe the transports of a breast truly parental, on beholding a daughter shoot up like some fair but modest flower, and acquire, day after day, fresh beauty and growing sweetness, so as to fill every eye with pleasure, and every heart with admiration; while, like that same flower, she appears unconscious of her opening charms, and only rejoices in the sun that cheers, and the hand that shelters her? In this manner shall you, my lovely friend, repay most acceptably a

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part (you never can, repay the whole) of that immense debt you owe for all the pains and fears formerly suffered, and for all the unutterable anxieties daily experienced, on your account.

Perhaps you are the only daughter, perhaps the only child of your mother, and her a widow. All her cares, all her sensations point to you. Of the tenderness of a much loved and much lamented husband you are the sole remaining pledge. On you she often fixes her earnest melting eye; with watchful attention she marks the progress of your rising virtues; in every softened feature she fondly traces your father's sense, your father's probity. Something within her whispers, you shall live to be the prop and comfort of her age, as you are now her companion and friend. Blessed Lord, what big emotions swell her labouring soul! But lest, by venting them in your company, she should affect you too much,

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she silently withdraws to pour them forth in tears of rapture ; a rapture only augmented by the sweetly sad remembrance that mingles with it, while at the same time it is exalted and consecrated doubly by ardent vows to heaven for your preservation and prosperity. Is there a young woman that can think of this with indifference ? Is there a young woman that can reverse the description, suppose herself the impious creature that could break a widowed mother's heart, and support the thought ?

When a daughter, it may be a favourite daughter, turns out unruly, foolish, wanton ; when she disobeys her parents, disgraces her education, dishonours her sex, disappoints the hopes she had raised ; when she throws herself away on a man unworthy of her, or if disposed, yet by his or her situation unqualified, to make her happy ; what her parents in any of these

cases must necessarily suffer, we may conjecture, they alone can feel.

The world, I know not how, overlooks in our sex a thousand irregularities, which it never forgives in yours; so that the honour and peace of a family are, in this view, much more dependant on the conduct of daughters than of sons; and one young lady going astray shall subject her relations to such discredit and distress, as the united good conduct of all her brothers and sisters, supposing them numerous, shall scarce ever be able to repair. But I press not any farther an argument so exceedingly plain. We can prognosticate nothing virtuous, nothing happy, concerning those wretched creatures of either sex, that do not feel for the satisfaction, ease, or honour of their parents.

Another and a principal source of your importance is the very great and extensive influence which you, in general, have

with Our sex. There is in female youth an attraction, which every man of the least sensibility must perceive. If assisted by beauty, it becomes in the first impression irresistible. Your power so far we do not affect to conceal. That He who made us meant it thus, is manifest from his having attuned our hearts to such emotions. Would to God you knew how to improve this power to its noblest ends! We should then rejoice to see it increased: then indeed it would be increased of course. Youth and beauty set off with sweetness and virtue, capacity and discretion—what have not they accomplished?

Far be it from me, my fair hearers, to damp your spirits, or to wish in the least to abridge your triumphs: on the contrary, by assisting you to direct, we would contribute to exalt and extend them. We are always sorry when we see them misplaced or abused; and—I was going to add, there is

nothing more common. To give them their just direction, is truly a nice point. Power, from whatever source derived, is always in danger of turning the head. It has turned many an old one. What then shall become of a young woman, placed on such a precipice? What can balance or preserve her, but sobriety and caution, a good providence, and good advice?

There are few young women who do not appear agreeable in the eyes of some men. And what might not be done by the greater part of you to secure solid esteem, and to promote general reformation, among our sex? Are such objects unworthy of your pursuit? or will ye say, that those which frequently engage it are of superior or equal importance?

If men discover that you study to captivate them by an outside only, or by little frivolous arts, there are, it must be confessed, many of them who will rejoice at

the discovery ; and while they themselves seem taken by the lure, they will endeavour in reality to make you their prey. Some more sentimental spirits, who might be dazzled in the beginning, will be soon disabused ; and a few more honourable characters will scorn to take advantage of your folly. Folly most undoubtedly it is, by a wrong application of your force, to lose the substance for the shadow.

Now and then a giddy youth may be caught. But what is the shallow admiration of an hundred such, or the smooth address of artful destroyers, to the heartfelt respect of men of worth and discernment, or the well-earned praise of reclaiming were it but **one** offender? I verily believe you might **reclaim** a multitude. I can hardly conceive that any man would be able to withstand the soft persuasion of your words, but chiefly of your looks and actions, habitually exerted on the side of goodness.

“ Were Virtue,” said an ancient philosopher, “ to appear amongst men in “ visible shape, what vehement desires “ would she enkindle !” Virtue exhibited without affectation by a lovely young person, of improved understanding and gentle manners, may be said to appear with the most alluring aspect, surrounded by the Graces ; and that breast must be cold indeed which does not take fire at the sight !

The influence of the sexes is, no doubt, reciprocal ; but I must ever be of opinion, that yours is the greatest. How often have I seen a company of men who were disposed to be riotous, checked all at once into decency by the accidental entrance of an amiable woman ; while her good sense and obliging deportment charmed them at least into a temporary conviction, that there is nothing so beautiful as female excellence, nothing so delightful as female conversation in its best form !

Were such conviction frequently repeated, (and it would be frequently repeated, if such excellence and such conversation were more general) what might we not expect from it at last? In the mean time, it were easy to point out instances of the most evident reformation wrought on particular men, by their having happily conceived a passion for virtuous women: but among the least valuable of your sex, when have you known any that were amended by the society or example of the better part of ours?

To form the manners of men various causes contribute; but nothing, I apprehend, so much as the turn of the women with whom they converse. Those who are most conversant with women of virtue and understanding will be always found the most amiable characters, other circumstances being supposed alike. Such society, beyond every thing else, rubs off the corners that give many of our sex an un-

gracious roughness. It produces a polish more perfect, and more pleasing, than that which is received from a general commerce with the world. This last is often specious, but commonly superficial. The other is the result of gentler feelings, and a more elegant humanity: the heart itself is moulded; habits of undissembled courtesy are formed; a certain flowing urbanity is acquired; violent passions, rash oaths, coarse jests, indelicate language of every kind, are precluded and disrelished. Understanding and virtue, by being often contemplated in the most engaging lights, have a sort of assimilating power. I do not mean, that the men I speak of will become feminine; but their sentiments and deportment will contract a grace. Their principles will have nothing ferocious or forbidding; their affections will be chaste and soothing at the same instant. In their case the Gentleman, the Man of worth, the Christian, will all melt insensibly and

sweetly into one another. How agreeable the composition ! In the same way too, honourable love is inspired and cherished. —Honourable love ! that great preservative of purity, that powerful softener of the fiercest spirit, that mighty improver of the rudest carriage, that all-subduing, yet all-exalting principle of the human breast, which humbles the proud, and bends the stubborn, yet fills with lofty conceptions, and animates with a fortitude that nothing can conquer—what shall I say more ?—which converts the savage into a man, and lifts the man into a hero ! What a happy change should we behold in the minds, the morals, and the demeanour of our youth, were this charming passion to take place of that false and vicious gallantry which gains ground amongst us every day, to the disgrace of our country, to the discouragement of holy wedlock, to the destruction of health, fortune, decency, refinement, rectitude of mind, and dignity of manners ! For my

part, I despair of seeing the effeminate, trifling, and dissolute character of the age reformed, so long as this kind of gallantry is the mode. But it will be the mode, so long as the present fashionable system of Female Education continues.

Parents now a days almost universally, down to the lowest tradesman, or mechanic, who to ape his superiors strains himself beyond his circumstances, send their daughters to Boarding-schools. And what do they mostly learn there? I say, Mostly; for there are exceptions, and such as do the Mistresses real honour. Need I mention that, making allowance for those exceptions, they learn chiefly to dress, to dance, to speak bad French, to prattle much nonsense, to practise I know not how many pert conceited airs, and in consequence of all to conclude themselves Accomplished Women? I say nothing here, of the alarming suggestions I have heard as to the corruption of their morals. Thus

prepared they come forth into the world. Their parents, naturally partial, fancy them to be every thing that is fine, and are impatient to shew them, or, according to the fashionable phrase, to let them see Company ; by which is chiefly meant exhibiting them in public places. Thither at least many of them are conducted. They have youth, and perhaps beauty. The effect of both is heightened by all possible means, at an expence frequently felt for a long time after. They are intoxicated by so many things concurring to deprive them of their little senses. Gazers and flatterers they meet with every where. All is romance and distraction, the extravagance of vanity, and the rage of conquest. They think of nothing that is domestic or rational. Alas ! they were never taught it. How to appear abroad with the greatest advantage, is the main concern. In subserviency to that, as well as from the general love of amusement, Parties of Pleasure, as they are called,

become the prevailing demand. The same dispositions on the side of the men, sometimes stimulated by the worst designs, often seconded by good nature, and not seldom perhaps pushed on by the fear of appearing less generous or less gallant, prompt them to keep pace with all this folly. They are soon fired in the chace; every thing is gay and glittering; prudence appears too cold a monitor; gravity is deemed severe; the Ladies must be pleased; mirth and diversion are all in all. The phantoms pass: the female adventurers must return home; it is needless to say, with what impressions. The young gentlemen are not always under equal restraint; their blood boils; the tavern, the streets, the stews, eke out the evening; riot and madness conclude the scene: or if this should be prevented, it is not difficult to imagine the dissipation that must naturally grow out of those idle gallantries often repeated. Nor shall we be surprised to find the majority of our

youth so insignificant, and so profligate; when to these we join the influence of bad or giddy women grown up, the infection of the most pestilent books, and the pattern of veterans in sin, who are ever zealous to display the superiority of their talents by the number of their disciples, and secretly solicitous by the strength of their party to make amends for the weakness of their cause.

That men are sometimes dreadfully successful in corrupting the women, cannot be denied. But do women on the other side never corrupt the men? I speak not at present of those abandoned creatures that are the visible ruin of so many of our unhappy youth; but I must take the liberty to say that, amongst a number of your sex who are not sunk so low, there is a forwardness, a levity of look conversation and demeanour, unspeakably hurtful to young men. Their reverence for female virtue it in a great measure de-

troys ; it even tempts them to suspect that the whole is a pretence, that the sex are all of a piece. The consequences of this, with regard to their behaviour while they remain single, the prejudices it must necessarily produce against marriage, and the wild work it is likely to make if they ever enter into that state, I leave you to imagine.

Hitherto I have spoken only of the interest young women have with our sex. Let me now say something of that which they have with their Own. It is not perhaps so extensive as the other ; but for obvious reasons it cannot be inconsiderable. Do they always use it to good purposes ? Do they never corrupt one another ? Do none of them assist the common enemy ; those wicked and designing men that are combined against the sex, especially against the innocent and unwary ? Do the old never initiate the young in those low arts of dissimulation and cunning, which a

wife woman cannot want, and which a worthy woman will not practise? Do the young—But I hasten from so painful a topic, to consider the Importance of your sex in another light. As you have certainly great influence at present, so,

In the next place, it may be probably in your power to communicate much happiness, or to occasion much misery hereafter. I think now of the chances you have to be connected in Wedlock. These it is impossible to calculate: but there are not, I suppose, many young women who, at one time or another, unless they themselves be in fault, may not form that connexion with the usual prospects; and I say, that the men you marry, the children you bring, and the community at large, will be all deeply interested in your conduct.

As to the first, I am not ignorant that there are some men so grossly insensible, as

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to be for the most part little or nothing affected by the temper or behaviour of their wives; provided only they do not ruin their affairs. And in truth, if those wives be ill tempered or ill behaved, such want of feeling is so far well for the husbands. If otherwise, how much are they themselves objects of compassion, thus condemned to drag a wretched life with beings, on whom all their endeavours to delight are lost! How sensibly must such a situation pain a delicate and ingenuous mind! What can reconcile her to it, but the strongest principles of religion?

Some fordid or saturnine spirits of either sex there may be, who can support a connexion of this kind with a stupid indifference; plodding along through a tasteless existence, without attachment or gratitude, desire or hope. Whether the case be very common, I leave others to decide. Of both sexes there are certainly many who are not made of such dull

materials. With respect to them—— But surely it cannot be necessary to display the felicity, or the wo, which must unavoidably arise to them from their partners. Here indeed, as in most instances where the modes of life happen to influence, it must be allowed the men have the advantage. If they find themselves unequally yoked, they are generally furnished with various means of beguiling their wretchedness at a distance from home; whereas, if such be the fate of the poor women, they are commonly left to pine away in solitary misery. For them scarce any allowance is made; to them little or no pity is shown: while the former make themselves judges in their own cause, and the partial world is ready to side with them. But yet, if the usages of that leave them often more room to elude the ideas of domestic distress, the feelings of nature will never suffer them fairly to escape it. A woman, it is certain, if she be so minded, has still the

power of plaguing her partner out of every real enjoyment ;—a power however, of which nothing can justify the exercise, and which when exercised is, like every other act of tyranny, sure to recoil upon the tyrant.

It is natural for me to wish well to my own sex ; and therefore you will not wonder, if I be solicitous for your possessing every quality that can render you agreeable companions in a relation which of all others is the most intimate, should be the most endearing, and must be the happiest or the worst. But to this solicitude my friendship for you is at least an equal motive. Were the lower springs of self-love to have no effect on your conduct, I must yet think, that the more refined principles of generosity and goodness ought to prompt it. Ah ! my young friends, what pleasure can be compared to that of conferring felicity ? What honour can be enjoyed by your sex,

equal to that of showing yourselves every way worthy of a virtuous tenderness from ours? What can be conceived so properly female as inspiring, improving, and continuing such a tenderness, in all its charming extent? Contrasted with this, how unamiable, and how miserable, must we pronounce the passion for ungentle command, for petulant dominion, so shamefully indulged by some women as soon as they find a man in their power!

But lastly, let us suppose you Mothers; a character which, in due time, many of you will sustain. How does your importance rise! A few years elapsed, and I please myself with the prospect of seeing you, my honoured auditress, surrounded with a family of your own, dividing with the partner of your heart the anxious, yet delightful labour, of training your common offspring to virtue and society, to religion and immortality; while, by thus dividing it, you leave him more at leisure to plan

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and provide for you all; a task, which he prosecutes with tenfold alacrity, when he reflects on the beloved objects of it, and finds all his toils both soothed and rewarded by the wisdom and sweetness of your deportment to him and to his children.

I think I behold you, while he is otherwise necessarily engaged, casting your fond maternal regards round and round through the pretty smiling circle; not barely to supply their bodily wants, but chiefly to watch the gradual openings of their minds, and to study the turns of their various tempers, that you may “teach the young idea how to shoot,” and lead their passions by taking hold of their hearts. I admire the happy mixture of affection and skill which you display in assisting Nature, not forcing her; in directing the understanding, not hurrying it; in exercising without wearying the memory, and in moulding the behaviour without con-

straint. I observe you prudently overlooking a thousand childish follies. You forgive any thing but falshood or obstinacy : you commend as often as you can : you reprove only when you must ; and then you do it to purpose, with moderation and temper, but with solemnity and firmness, till you have carried your point. You are at pains to excite honest emulation : you take care to avoid every appearance of partiality ; to convince your dear charge, that they are all dear to you, that superior merit alone can entitle to superior favour, that you will deny to none of them what is proper, but that the kindest and most submissive will be always preferred. At times, you even partake in their innocent amusements, as if one of them ; that they may love you as their friend, while they revere you as their parent. In graver hours, you insinuate knowledge and piety by your conversation and example, rather than by formal lectures and awful admonitions. And finally, to secure as far as

possible the success of all, you dedicate them daily to God, with the most fervent supplications for his blessing.—Thus you show yourself a conscientious and a judicious mother at the same moment; and in that light I view you with veneration. I honour you as sustaining a truly glorious character on the great theatre of humanity. Of the part you have acted I look forward to the consequences, direct and collateral, future and remote. Those lovely plants which you have reared I see spreading, and still spreading, from house to house, from family to family, with a rich increase of fruit. I see you diffusing virtue and happiness through the human race; I see generations yet unborn rising up to call you Blessed! I worship that Providence which has destined you for such usefulness, for such felicity. I pity the man that is not charmed with the image of so much excellence; an image which, in one degree or another, has been realized by many women of

worth and understanding in every age: I will add, an image which, when realized, cannot fail of being contemplated with peculiar delight by all the benevolent spirits of heaven, with the Father and Saviour of the world at their head! And are there, amongst the sons of men, any that will presume to depreciate such women, to speak of them with an air of superiority, or to suggest that your sex are not capable of filling the more important spheres of life?

To quote the words of an old writer:
“All mankind is the pupil and disciple
“of female institution: the daughters
“till they write women, and the sons
“till the first seven years be past; the
“time when the mind is most ductile,
“and prepared to receive impression, being wholly in the care and conduct of
“the mother.” Alas! my fair countrywomen, why are not more of you struck with such considerations? Why, ye

daughters of Britain, are so many of you insensible to those brightest glories of your sex? Where is your love for your native country, which, by thus excelling, you might so nobly serve? where your emulation of those Heroic Women, that have in ancient days graced this happy land? How long will you be ambitious of flaunting in French attire, of fluttering about with the levity of that fantastic people? When will you be satisfied with the simplicity of elegance, and the gracefulness of modesty, so becoming in a nation like this, supported by trade, polished by taste, and enlightened by true religion? Say, when will you relinquish delusive pursuits, and dangerous pleasures, the gaze of fools, and the flattery of libertines, for the peaceful and solid study of whatever can adorn your nature, do honour to your country, reflect credit on your profession of christianity, give joy to all your connexions, and confer dignity on Womankind?

S E R M O N II.

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M O D E S T Y

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M O D T T

A P I A I L

S E R M O N I I.

On Modesty of Apparel.

1. TIM. ii. 8, 9.

*I will—that women adorn themselves in
Modest Apparel.*

LET me recall the attention of my female friends to a subject that concerns them highly. I hope that hitherto I have said nothing unkind. I would not rob your sex of a single advantage they possess from nature, providence, or legitimate custom. I would not rob you of the smallest ornament that Judgment has put on, that Prudence allows, or that Decency warrants. On the contrary, I would willingly add to your allurements: I want to see you yet more engaging, to see you still more completely adorned.

Superfluous, unbecoming, and unavailing decorations, it is true, I would persuade you to renounce ; but it should be only in order to make room for such as will improve beauty where found, or supply its place where wanting.

Your consequence in the creation I fear not to acknowledge : I feel it all. You have already heard me assert it. I will assert it ever, by pleading your cause against ignorance, prejudice, and malice. Only take care, my dear clients, not to hurt it yourselves. Remember how tender a thing a woman's reputation is ; how hard to preserve, and when lost how impossible to recover ; how frail many, and how dangerous most, of the gifts you have received ; what misery and what shame have been often occasioned by abusing them ! I tremble for your situation. Suffer me again to put you on your guard. My text, you have seen, has nothing in it really severe : St. Paul is, in fact, a better

friend to women than has been commonly supposed: he seems to have understood perfectly what became them, and to have consulted their interests more truly than the most passionate of their admirers. While these, by corrupting or misleading you, whether with or without design, would lessen your influence, and obstruct your felicity; he would effectually contribute to both, by inculcating every thing that can make you at once more amiable and more happy.

What I am now to offer will turn on the ornament he first mentions. “I will—
 “that women adorn themselves in Modest Apparel”—in Modest Apparel, as opposed to that which is Indecent, and to that which is Vain: distinctions, whereof the theory, I must confess, it is in many cases not easy, and in some perhaps not practicable, to settle with precision; such a powerful influence in those matters have custom and the opinion of the world.

But in this instance, as in others where the passions are concerned, the strictest casuist will, I presume, be generally the safest. The zeal of the ancient Fathers on such subjects carried some of them far; farther, I doubt, than the relaxation of modern manners would well bear. Were a young woman now a days, from a peculiar sense of the sacredness and refinement of female virtue, to appear with any very singular severity in her dress, she would hardly, I fear, escape the charge of affectation; a charge, which every prudent woman will avoid as much as possible. But let the licence of the age be what it will, I must needs think that, according to every rule of duty and decorum, there ought ever to be a manifest difference between the attire of a Virtuous Woman, and that of one who has renounced every title to the honourable name. It were indelicate, it is unnecessary, to explain this difference. In some respects, it is sufficiently discerned by the eye of the

public; though, I am sorry to say, not sufficiently attended to by the generality of women themselves. If, in other respects, it be not seen, or do not strike; the cause, I apprehend, must be that declension from the strictness of morals, which was hinted at a moment before; a declension that would have shocked pagans themselves, in the purest state of ancient manners, when prostitutes were compelled to wear a particular garb, by which they were distinguished from women of virtue.

But to enter more particularly into this first point of Modest Apparel, as opposed to that which a christian woman should hold Indecent.

Image to yourselves a circle composed only of people who are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, nor in any circumstance afraid to act on that great maxim of our apostle, “ Be not conformed to this

“ world ; but be ye transformed by the
“ renewing of your minds.” At the
same time, let them have all the candour
and charity, which the most charitable
religion that was ever known can inspire.
And now suppose, that a young lady
dressed up to the height of the present
fashion, but a stranger to most of them,
drops into their company. In what light,
do ye conceive, the manner of her dress
would probably appear ? The laws of
christian candour would naturally pre-
vent them from seeing her character in a
bad light on that account, and would
unquestionably incline them to hope the
best. But can ye believe that they would
approve, or justify, the extreme gaiety
and looseness of her attire ? Suppose
however, that her conversation discovered
a good understanding, and that her beha-
viour had not the least tincture of that
levity with which she seemed decked out ;
that, on the contrary, every part of both
was wholly unlike it (a conjunction by

no means impossible;) could they forbear, in that case, to lament the tyranny of the mode, or to regret that a daughter of Wisdom should, notwithstanding her superior descent and noble pretensions, be decorated like the daughters of Folly? But whose judgment, I beseech you, would a young woman, ambitious of regulating her appearance, as well as her dispositions and deportment, on the purest standard, prefer; that of such persons as I have just described; or that of those who either never regarded the precepts and spirit of christianity at all, or who, professing some faint respect for them, yet scruple not to sink them in the spirit and maxims of the world?

Let us put another case, and suppose a young lady educated by a mother, who to the best sense and truest breeding joined the utmost reverence for religion, and the tenderest concern for the soul of her child;

qualities which, for the honour of your sex, I hope you will not pronounce incompatible. Let this accomplished parent bestow upon her daughter a culture worthy of herself; instructing her in every thing that can become the Female and the Christian character; among the rest, recommending a lovely Modesty and graceful Simplicity of Apparel, and enforcing all by an example equally unexceptionable and pleasing. Suppose the daughter to improve these uncommon advantages (for uncommon, I fear, they are) with the strictest care and attention. In what light do ye conceive the very free mode of dress, so generally affected by the sex at present, would appear to her? I am far from thinking she would assume the airs of sanctimonious prudery, or indulge the style of supercilious censure; things totally different from the form of education we have figured her to receive. But would she admire that mode in others? Would she copy it herself? or would she wish

her companions to copy it? Would she choose to be intimate with those young ladies that seize every opportunity of exhibiting their charms to the public, and vie with one another who shall most liberally display what her honoured mother taught her more decently to veil?

Is the mode then in question to be considered as inconsistent with the character of a Virtuous Woman? By no means. May not dispositions the most unchaste often hide under the mask of an attire the most modest? Who can doubt it? But what follows? That such attire is not the properest covering of Virtue, or what, if left to pursue undisturbed the dictates of delicacy and prudence, she would not readily fly to in a state of civilized society? Will any one say, that they who decline it, best consult either their safety, or their reputation amongst the wise; that they, who run into all the latitudes allowed by the wantonness of fashion, are sufficiently

watchful against temptation themselves, or sufficiently careful not to throw it in the way of others ; that beauty may be as secure when most exposed, as when least so ; or finally, that instead of “ abstaining from all appearance of evil,” according to the doctrine of a religion which requires the severest vigilance, every appearance of evil may be admitted, in compliance with the practice of a world, where vice steals upon unwary mortals by persuading them to part with their out-guards ?

Thus far have we argued for Modesty of Apparel, in opposition to its contrary, upon the general principles of propriety and reputation, of morality and religion. She, to whom these principles are familiar, and in whom the feelings that arise out of them are not blunted by too frequent intercourse with the fashionable and the gay, will on this article carry about with her a kind of living standard, which she will be enabled to apply to particular

occasions, with a degree of discretion that no rules of ours can teach; and such a one will perceive in our apostle's precept a justness and solidity, of which we do not expect that any speculation of ours should thoroughly convince you, without the concurrence of a virtuous sensibility on your part.

To what has been said in favour of Modest Apparel under this head, I must not forget to add, that it is a powerful attractive to Honourable love. The male heart is a study, in which your sex are supposed to be a good deal conversant. Yet in this study, you must give me leave to say, many of them seem to me but indifferent proficient. To gain men's affections, women in general are naturally desirous. They need not deny, they cannot conceal it. The sexes were made for each other. We wish for a place in your hearts: why should not you wish for one in ours? But how much are you

deceived, my fair friends, if you dream of taking that fort by storm ! When you show a sweet sollicitude to please by every decent, gentle, unaffected attraction ; we are soothed, we are subdued, we yield ourselves your willing captives. But if at any time by a forward appearance you betray a confidence in your charms, and by throwing them out upon us all at once you seem resolved, as it were, to force our admiration ; that moment we are on our guard, and your assaults are vain, provided at least we have any spirit or sentiment. In reality, they who have very little of either, I might have said they who have none, even the silliest, even the loosest men shall in a sober mood be taken with the bashful air, and reserved dress, of an amiable young woman, infinitely more than they ever were with all the open blaze of laboured beauty, and arrogant claims of undisguised allurements ; the human heart, in its better sensations, being still formed to the love of virtue,

Let me add, that the human imagination hates to be confined. We are never highly delighted, where something is not left us to fancy. This last observation holds true throughout all nature, and all art. But when I speak of these, I must subjoin, that Art being agreeable no farther than as it is conformed to Nature, the one will not be wanted in the case before us, if the other be allowed its full influence. What I mean is this; that supposing a young lady to be deeply possessed with a regard for “whatsoever things are pure, venerable, “and of a good report,” it will lead to decorum spontaneously, and flow with unstudied propriety through every part of her attire and demeanour. Let it be likewise added, that Simplicity, the inseparable companion both of genuine grace, and of real modesty, if it do not always strike at first (of which it seldom fails) is sure however, when it does strike, to produce the deepest and most permanent im-

pressions : which brings me by an easy transition to

The second part of the present consideration, that of Modest Apparel, as opposed to what may be styled Vain. I can never think of this, without recollecting in general (for who can remember the particulars of) the catalogue given by the prophet Isaiah of the various implements and instruments of dress, used by the daughters of Zion in his time. Isaiah is by all acknowledged the Prince of the Prophets, in an evangelical view : yet he did not deem it beneath the dignity of his commission, to descend into the most minute detail on such a subject ; a circumstance which, it is hoped, may soften the severity of censure against the preacher of this hour, if the spirit of criticism, or the spirit of scrupulosity, should be disposed to condemn his well meant endeavour. The passage I now refer to is in the third chapter of Isaiah, towards the end, where

the prophet having, in the name of God, complained of the pride and wantonness of those eastern females, and threatened them with disease and infamy on that account, goes on to mention “ the bravery of
“ their tinkling ornaments about their
“ feet, and their cauls, and their round
“ tires like the moon ; the chains, and
“ the bracelets, and the mufflers ; the
“ bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs ;
“ and the head-bands, and the tablets,
“ and the ear-rings ; the rings and nose-
“ jewels ; the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins ; the glasses,
“ and the fine linen, and the hoods, and
“ the veils.” On the first reading of this catalogue, it must be owned, one can scarce forbear to smile. But to those unhappy women who gave occasion for it, nothing, alas ! could be more serious, if you attend to the denunciations which both precede and follow it. I leave you to peruse them at your leisure. They are in

the style of the country and age in which they were uttered. I am sure they convey a loud lesson to this. Whether the daughters of our Zion, in the present very polite generation, and especially in this most polite city, do or do not outstrip those Jewish ladies of old, we cannot take upon us to determine. But were we inclined to indulge a vein of ridicule on female folly, here methinks we might have ample scope. We are not inclined to indulge it. We reflect on these things with real concern; and with the utmost seriousness conjure our countrywomen to reform whatever is indecent, and to retrench whatever is exorbitant, in their attire.

That there are stations and circumstances, in which splendor of dress is perfectly allowable, may extremely proper, none, I think, but the narrowest minds, will deny. For my own part, I freely acknowledge that I love to see a woman

genteelly habited, if her situation admit of it. In truth, splendor without gentility, as well in this as in every other article where ornament is concerned, will ever seem poor and insipid to all but untaught and vulgar spirits; whereas, on the other side, it is certain, that the latter may very well subsist without the former; nor is its effect ever felt more strongly, or more happily, than when it receives no assistance from the other, but results solely from our perceptions of elegant simplicity. I say Elegant Simplicity; an object, which appears to me deserving of more attention than is commonly paid it by your sex.

In affairs of this kind, it is but just to allow to women a degree of curiosity and care, which the laws of good sense, sound philosophy, and masculine virtue, refuse to men: a distinction so true, so universal, and so palpable, that those of the last, who betray a particular solicitude in adorning their persons beyond cleanliness

and a certain graceful ease, seldom fail to make themselves little, in the eyes of every man who is not himself effeminate, and of every woman too who is not a slave to fashion. How contemptible many of our young men must necessarily appear to such, it is not easy to express. But of seeing them become truly Men in this instance, any more than in others that might be named, I despair; while so many of our young women give so visible a preference to embroidery, finery, and foppish manners, above a plain coat, a cultivated understanding, and a manly deportment. It will be always so, till they acquire a taste for plainness, sobriety, and wisdom, in what relates to themselves. But that must begin by restraining, in every possible way, the foolish and pernicious passion I am speaking of; for a foolish and pernicious passion I scruple not to pronounce it.

Is there any probability, that those who are entirely under its power will take de-

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light in domestic, intellectual, or spiritual improvements? Is not a constant pursuit of trivial ornament an indubitable proof of a trivial mind? Will she that is always looking into her glass, be much disposed to look into her character? Is the spending of whole hours every morning at the toilet, a likely method of marking the rest of the day down for wisdom? Is vanity favourable to devotion, or self-conceit the parent of self-correction? Will that young woman who hopes to captivate by dress, or by appearance alone, be very anxious about any better recommendation? If to sparkle here for a few years be the supreme ambition, Hereafter will be hardly thought of. The flattery of every fool will be preferred to the approbation of angels; and a connexion with some wretched creature (wretched indeed must he be who is caught by mere show!) will be ardently sought, while the friendship of God is neglected. What shall I say more? For a mortal and im-

mortal being, who has many an error to correct, many a passion to mortify, many a virtue to practise, and who, if she live, may probably have important service to render society—for such a being to lavish the principal portion of her time and study on the decoration of a body that will soon, that may suddenly, become the prey of creeping things—Gracious God, what folly, what madness !

Are there no allowances then to be made ? Allowances for what ? For the vanity of a young mind. Most certainly, if by this plea you mean to extenuate the guilt of such a conduct. But would you offer to excuse it ? Would you pretend to justify a reasonable creature in acting, habitually and wilfully, a most unreasonable part ; in sacrificing her improvement, her salvation, her prospects of usefulness and dignity in life, the best interests of this world, as well as the everlasting concernments of the

next, to the idol Dress? For so I state it. I suppose, and would to God it were not too common a case! that this miserable idol is suffered to swallow up the consideration of all that is solid, rational, and praise-worthy; to consume those precious hours that were allotted for the most valuable purposes; and, in place of securing the great ends of existence both present and future, to pervert the capacities of nature, the acquirements of education, and the bounties of providence—to pervert them to the low design of being admired for embellishments that imply no merit in the wearer, and can confer no honour in the eye of any but the worthless and the vain. Can such a conduct, I say, be thought innocent, or in any respect consistent with the rules of christianity, or of conscience?

That the idol I speak of renders its votaries unhappy even in this world, is a fact daily experienced. But who can de-

scribe the profusion of expence, with the painful and pitiful shifts that are often necessary to support it; the encroachments on health, the hurry of spirits, the travail of fancy; the degradation of being frequently, for whole hours, under the confident hands of the meanest of mankind; together with all the anxieties of heart, the agonies of rivalry, the deep-felt disgrace on being disappointed of conquest, or of fame; the distraction and despair on being outshone by—a Finer Gown; in a word, all the ridiculous and all the deserved distress, to which they are perpetually exposed?

I have just mentioned encroachments on health. These indeed, as well as the rest, are little considered by a young lady, keen in the pursuit of show and admiration. But if she be not apprehensive of their consequences, in relation to life, and comfort, and ease, I wonder she is not immediately alarmed at their effects,

with regard to that very appearance which is her favourite object. I wonder she does not perceive at once, how much her bloom and sprightliness, the lustre of her eyes, and the freshness of her form, are impaired by such endless, such enormous fatigue, agitation, and irregularity. I am astonished she does not reflect, that she is taking the most effectual methods to shorten that period of youth, on which her triumphs depend. Mistaken creature! thou art cruelly hastening on the time, when thou shalt be frightened to look at thyself; when not only thy mind, but thy face, shall be “sicklied o’er with the “pale cast of thought;” when languor, disease, and depression, shall undermine and destroy every remaining allurements, and leave thee to lament too late the jading course thou hast run. You forget also that dressing up beauty continually, wears it out; that, like strength, or study, or business, it requires the frequent intermission of its toils; but that, more than

any of them, it is enfeebled by constant exertion; and that the arts commonly made use of to heighten and repair it, only accelerate and increase its decay, while the complexion, the skin, and the hair, are all unnaturally disguised and tortured.

Did not this shameful passion destroy, or deaden in a great measure, the worthier sensibilities of good nature, I should also mention here the more serious and important distresses, in which they involve others.—But the stretches of credit to parents, the inconveniencies to many families, the ruin to not a few, the losses to tradesmen, who are often not paid, the hardships to a vast variety of people, whose sufferings are little thought of amidst the glare of ostentation and the triumph of fancy, it were impossible fully to paint. Who does not know, that the parade of one gaudy evening shall sometimes subject a score of honest citizens to

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difficulties for a whole month? Is this christian? Is this humane? But where the Fury of dress tyrannizes, how can the gentle pleadings of Charity hope to be heard? And as to Charity's eldest daughter Beneficence, what chance has she, in general, to contend with that mighty force, the Mode? Those streams which heaven has committed to the direction of the former, for the refreshment of industry, and the comfort of affliction; how often are they diverted with sacrilegious violence to the feeding of pride!

But the present age, it will be said, is distinguished by the most diffusive, the most illustrious works of humanity, both private and public. We own it, and rejoice in the effect. Far from denying the people of this country any of their just honours, we are almost tempted to speak of them with exultation. But—I wish the works in question may not be

frequently performed by way of atonement for certain fashionable vices, which it is too easy to reconcile with them.—“Charity hopeth all things.”—I know it, and do verily believe that even now, addicted as the world is to ostentation, there are many, very many characters, who nobly deny themselves for the sake of others; or rather, who find the highest indulgence in consecrating to objects of benevolence and piety a large share of their fortunes, without seeking by such means to purchase a dispensation for criminal pursuits. But forgive me, if I say, with regard to numbers, that the flagrant affectation of shining in public, and the dreadful passions thence arising in private life, are not easily reconciled with real principles of religious munificence. These, I know, are unpopular ideas. I am sorry for it: but their being so, is no reason why we should suppress them; it is the very reverse.

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To the arguments already urged several may be added. It may deserve your consideration,

In the first place, that to cultivate cleanliness and finery at the same time, is rather perhaps a difficult attainment. Your sex is much belied, if it be a very common one. This, I think, is certain, that to attend with exactness to one object at once, is ordinarily sufficient employment for the mind. But can any degree of finery compensate the want of cleanliness? A dirty woman—I turn from the shocking idea, to mention,

In the next place, that engaging thing hinted at before, Simplicity of Dress. In all the sciences, in every valuable profession, in the common intercourses of life, and let me add, even in the sublimest subjects, Simplicity is that which above every thing else touches and delights. Without it, indeed, all else is feeble and unaffecting.

Where simplicity is wanting, men may be dazzled for a moment. Mere splendor will strike them at first; but on reflexion they will soon discover, that splendor of itself, like every other idol, is nothing. On the other hand, where Simplicity, the sister of Truth, appears, the attraction is eternal. Hence the never-failing entertainment and instruction derived from the works of antiquity in all the fine arts; of which, I suppose for that reason chiefly, they remain to this day, and will ever remain, the sovereign standards. Those amongst the moderns, who have in this respect copied them most happily, have been always most admired. To instance in the art of painting, with a more immediate reference to our subject; what honour has been acquired by such of its professors as have approached nearest to the noble simplicity of ancient workmanship! Its business, we know, is most particularly with Beauty, in all her finest forms. That, I presume, was never studied more

ſucceſsfully by any, than by the great Raphael. But who, that has an eye for ſuch objects, can avoid being ſtruck with the chaſte, ſober, and unaffected graces of his females ? And as to his manner of clothing them, what remarkable plainneſs, what delightful modeſty, even where the colours and ſtuffs are intended to be richeſt ! How different from thoſe painters of the Gothic ſtyle, who, not underſtanding the diſtinction between ornament, and finery, which is its exceſs ; between beauty, and ſhow, which is the affectation of it ; load their women with jewels, trappings, and other embellishments, magnificent indeed, but tawdry !

Nor is the grand principle of Simplicity confined to the imitative arts ; it runs through all. Hence, in a great meaſure, the peculiar ſatisfaction derived from the company of a man well-bred and worthy at the ſame time. He looks, he ſpeaks, he moves, with a modeſt eaſe ; there is no-

thing artificial or studied in his conversation and deportment. Hence too the superior pleasure from the prospect of a garden laid out with taste, in which the views are natural, ample, and unforced, above that of seeing one cut into a thousand little parterres, and encumbered with a crowd of laboured conceits. Let me subjoin, hence the inexpressible power and majesty of Holy Writ itself, even abstracted from its divine original. And, to come to the case directly before us, hence the resistless charm which attends a Virtuous Woman attired with plainness and judgment; two things, which, making allowance for the mutability and caprice of fashion in circumstances of less moment, will always give the most genuine and lasting content.

The neat appearance of many females belonging to a sect well known, has been frequently remarked, and greatly admired. It would be much more agreeable, could

it be disjoined from the stiffness that accompanies it ; a defect utterly inconsistent with the rules of taste. But those people are taught to despise every thing of this kind, and to understand literally such passages of scripture as seem to prohibit sumptuous apparel. In short, they plead religious principle for the form of their attire. We should believe them, but for the richness of the materials, and the fineness of the texture. Many of that sect are very intelligent : can they persuade themselves, that through all their affectation of plainness the world does not perceive the utmost pride of expence ?

On this article your judgment will be seen in joining frugality and simplicity together ; in being never fond of finery ; in carefully distinguishing between what is glaring, and what is genteel ; in preserving elegance with the plainest habit ; in wearing costly array but seldom, and always with ease ; a point, that may be

attained by her who has learnt not to think more highly of herself for the richest raiment she can put on.

Were a system of this kind to prevail, I cannot help thinking, that the effects would be beneficial and happy. What sums would be saved, where they ought to be saved, for more valuable ends ! What sums would be kept at home, that now go abroad to enrich our most dangerous rivals ! French gewgaws would give place to British manufactures. The ladies of this island, inferior to none in beauty, would be the apes of none in dress. They would practise that species of patriotism, which is the most proper for their sex ; they would serve their country in their own way. How many evils to the community, to private families, and to individuals, would be prevented ! If in some of the most expensive parts of female decoration fewer hands were employed, a much greater number on the other side would

find exercise in cultivating an elegant propriety, and a beautiful diversity, through all the rest. The public taste would be improved in a thousand articles. And is there not reason to hope, that the appearance, the manners, and the minds of the Fair, would gain by the change?

They would be less showy indeed ; but they would be more engaging. Our gay assemblies, for gay assemblies there will always be, would glitter less in the gaze of foolish wonder ; but they would shine more in the eye of just discernment. And what honour would it reflect on your understandings, when in company, to see you superior to your dress, entirely forgetting that, and every other advantage you may possess, in an obliging attention to all present, and lending lustre to each ornament, instead of borrowing it merely from thence ! Or will any of you say, that a woman on the contrary is likely to be more esteemed, for appearing attentive to

herself alone, or trying to catch by so poor a bait, as a little gay clothing? She who does either, piques our pride, and offends our judgment, at the same instant. We are hurt by her bad breeding, in the one case; and in the other, we are provoked to think she should pay us such a sorry compliment, as to fancy we can be entangled in a cobweb.

When shall women, in general, understand thoroughly the effect of a comely habit, that, independant of pomp and despising extravagance, is worn as the sober, yet transparent veil of a more comely mind? Be assured, my young friends, it is thus that you will captivate most, and please longest. By pursuing this plan, you will preserve an equality in that great indispensable article of neatness. You will be clean, and you will be easy; nor will you be in danger of appearing butterflies one day, and flatterns the next. You will be always ready to receive your friends,

without seeming to be caught, or being at all disconcerted on account of your dress. How seldom is that the case amongst the flutterers of the age ! I wish we could say, amongst them only. For young ladies of more sobriety to be found so often slovenly, I might have said downright squalid and nasty, when no visitors are expected, is most peculiarly shameful. I cannot express the contempt and the disgust I feel, when I think of it. I will not think of it.

I proceed to observe, that what you take from tinsel trappings you will gain in time, in saving, and in real loveliness. The less vanity you betray, the more merit we shall be always disposed to allow you. We shall be doubly charmed, first with finding young women that are not slaves to show, and next with your putting so much respect on our heads and hearts, as to suppose we are only to be gained by better qualities.

Add to this, that men of ordinary fortunes, and proper sentiments, will not be afraid of connecting themselves with persons too prudent to be profuse, and too wise, as well as too worthy, when married, to court the admiration of all—but their Husbands.

The unbounded and undistinguishing love of admiration, has been thought the most common, the rankest, and the most noxious weed, that grows in the heart of a female. It is nourished by nothing more than by the love of finery. In effect, they depend on each other. But if you will begin by crushing the latter; the former, I am persuaded, will quickly decay, and at last fall to the ground. The love of finery naturally prompts the passion to be seen, that is, to be admired; for between these a conceited young creature makes no distinction. Alas! what woman is there at any age, who, if devoted to dress, burns not with impatience to display in public

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a new fashion, or a new any thing, which she has been told by those about her, or by her own imagination, looks exceeding fine? And of this impatience what is the source, but that very passion which I just now called The unbounded and undistinguishing love of admiration? The mischiefs flowing from thence have been touched upon in part. They will be farther traced hereafter. At present I shall only add, what ought to alarm women of decency, that an immoderate fondness for external embellishment is a strong temptation to a light and lascivious mind.

From the passage of Isaiah before quoted, compared with the verse immediately preceding, it appears that, in the case there pointed to, an indecent deportment was closely connected with an excessive vanity in apparel. And from the whole of that discourse it is manifest, the behaviour of the daughters of Zion at that time

was highly displeasing to the Almighty; which could only proceed from the influence their behaviour had upon their dispositions, or reciprocally from the latter as giving birth to the former. How applicable the observation to the case of many females at this day !

But has it not been too much the manner amongst preachers of every age, to decry that in which they lived, as having remarkably degenerated from those that went before, and to denounce peculiar judgments accordingly ? It often has, no doubt. And so far certainly they have forgotten the caution of Solomon ; “ Say
“ not thou, What is the cause that the
“ former days were better than these ?
“ For thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.” A mistake we would willingly avoid. Such complaints, when indulged indiscriminately, are either the dictates of a gloomy and querulous tem-

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per, or the trite and unmeaning declamation of mere popular preaching. I trust, we shall be charged with neither in saying, that to this nation there can accrue no good from the spirit of luxury, of levity, and of vice, so prevalent, and so spreading, in a sex that leads the world.

THE HISTORY OF

THE CITY OF BOSTON

FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT

TO THE PRESENT TIME

BY SAMUEL JOHNSON

IN TWO VOLUMES

LONDON: PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, 1790.

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S E R M O N III.

O N

FEMALE RESERVE.

S E R M O N I I I.

On Female Reserve.

1. TIM. ii. 8, 9.

*I will—that women adorn themselves with
Shamefacedness.*

MANY of you, my honoured hearers, have been addressed in the style of love and admiration. I have taken the liberty to address you in that of zeal and friendship; a style not the less sincere, or the less worthy of your attention, for being sober and impartial. Will you permit me to proceed in the same manner? Suppose me speaking to you as a brother. It will be more than a supposition. Have we not all one father by creation, even the great God? and by religion, is not the New Jerusalem the

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mother of us all ? With a brother's affection then I will go on to lay before you some better ornaments than wealth can purchase, in which I wish my beloved sisters to shine, that they may appear as becomes their high birth, and the noble expectations they are encouraged to entertain.

After modest apparel our apostle mentions Shamefacedness. " I will—that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with Shamefacedness." This lovely quality, in its largest extent, and in its most pleasing effects on female manners, shall be the subject of our present meditation. It is an ornament equally necessary and wise.

I. It is a Necessary ornament, considered, I mean, in a moral and religious light. I would only premise, that the amiable reserve, termed by St. Paul Shamefacedness, is something widely di-

stant from those airs of disdain, those pretences of aversion to men, which we now and then meet with in your sex. I said Pretences : For no degree of candour can persuade us to believe that such women, generally speaking, do not play a part, and under the mask of this seeming severity, this violent affectation of virtue, harbour passions of a very different kind. Who does not know, that the greatest prudes have often dropt their disguise at last ; and betrayed such dispositions as many a young woman of good nature, and courteous behaviour, is incapable of indulging ? Every thing overdone is liable to suspicion. Innocence in women wants not the aid of ostentation : like integrity in men, it rests in its own consciousness. Not so, however, as to neglect the rules of prudence and circumspection. To say the truth, prudery is not the prevailing evil of the times. Female modesty, even where it is most real, is in little danger, as the world goes, of

being carried to an extreme. In the gayer part of the world, how seldom, alas ! does it rise to the Shamefacedness enjoined in our text, and which on the very first hearing suggests the idea of a virtuous bashfulness. This beautiful grace,

“ Clear Chastity

“ With blushes redd’ning as she moves along,

“ Disorder’d at the deep regard she draws;

whither is she retired ? Where is the charming original, from which the poet drew so sweet a picture ?—Has Virtue then forsaken the sex ? God forbid. But I am bold to say, her favourite walks are not in those places of public entertainment, now so fondly frequented by so many women. She loves the shade. There she finds herself most secure from the blights of calumny, and the heats of temptation. Ah ! ye mothers of this land, how can you expose so rashly those tender blossoms committed to your care ? Have

ye forgotten that every unkindly breath is ready to blast them ? Are ye ignorant, how soon the whitest innocence may be sullied ; that it is possible even for the strictest principles to be corrupted ? Is there nothing in your own minds that whispers the frailty of your sex ?

But you plead the necessity of allowing to youth a little amusement, of showing your daughters a little of the world, of preventing, or rubbing off the awkwardness, that is apt to adhere to young persons who are confined at home. You urge the propriety of convincing them by comparison, how much the calm and rational pleasures of that home are preferable to the noisy and giddy diversions usually found abroad ; that in the latter there is nothing so wonderfully fine, so irresistibly alluring, as their youthful fancies, or the information of others, might lead them to suppose.

We admit your arguments, so far as they go. Keep within these bounds, and be blameless. But do the parents of the present generation commonly keep within them? Are not many of those parents as fond of gaiety and show, as the merest girl can possibly be? Is it surprising to see the daughters of such become very early the votaries of Folly, when every other day or night they are conducted in triumph to her temples, without any precaution, any previous pains taken to instruct them in the emptiness and worthlessness of the object worshipped there; worshipped with every circumstance that can serve to propagate the idolatry, while the poor innocents are inflamed by the concurrence of company, dress, flattery, example; the example of those whom, by nature and education, they are disposed to respect most highly, and to imitate most implicitly? It were strange indeed, if in this situation their too susceptible hearts should escape the fashionable con-

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tagion. But what can be said for those who thus directly, and with their eyes open, lead their children into a snare? —Cease, thou restless and raging spirit of hell, who art “going about seeking whom thou mayest devour,” cease thy cruel toil. The parents of Britain render it needless. The mothers of the church hasten to bring thee their little lambs, as if impatient for the pleasure of presenting them.—Excuse, ye better characters, this transport of indignation, kindled by an impiety which you are not capable of committing. I think with honour of all who truly merit the parental name. May the Father of the world increase their number, and multiply their joys! But for those wicked—I turn from them to you, ye pretty helpless creatures, who have lost—it may be, happily—merciful heaven! must I say, Happily lost your parents? or whose parents yet alive, but lost to themselves and to their offspring, have in the blindness of indul-

gence, or the barbarity of neglect, abandoned you to your own untutored conduct. Let me warn you of your danger. If there be no other friend to show a solicitude for your welfare, allow me at least to have that satisfaction.

Reflect, my sisters, on all I have said concerning your importance in life ; and look beyond life's narrow boundary. Consider everlasting consequences. Contemplate approaching judgment. You have received from the Almighty your bodies, and your souls, unstained by dishonour. You will be soon required to restore them immaculate. You belong to a society, for which your Saviour " gave himself, that he might sanctify and " cleanse it with the washing of water by " the word, that he might present it to " himself a glorious church, not having " spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Think of this. " Watch and pray, that " ye enter not into temptation."

The love of promiscuous amusement, how innocent soever it may often seem, and sometimes be, ensnares multitudes of your sex. Their earliest days are marked by a mixture of sprightliness and simplicity. They run, they laugh, they prattle; and then they often blush, for fear of having offended. As they grow up, their sensibilities become more enlightened, and more awake. They blush oftener. It is the precious colouring of virtue, as one has happily phrased it. They contract a quicker perception of what is decent, and of what is wise. A sweet timidity was given them to guard their innocence, by inclining them to shrink from whatever might threaten to injure it. Their passions, as they rise, are restrained from exorbitance, by a secret sentiment of shame and honour. In this state of mind, they come to hear much concerning public diversions. The description is frequently repeated, and always exaggerated. Their curiosity takes fire; they

are eager to participate. They are indulged once, a second, a third time, often, without controul. By little and little their natural fearfulness begins to abate. For a while they are shocked at signs of rudeness. Their ears are wounded by the language of vice: Oaths, imprecations, double meanings, every thing obscene fills them with disgust and horror. But custom soon begets familiarity; and familiarity produces indifference. The emotions of delicacy are less frequent, less strong. And now they seldom blush, although perhaps they often affect it. At the image of sin they tremble no longer: their minds are already debauched. All the internal fences of modesty are broken down. Can you wonder, if it be then easily assailed from without? But what if it be not? What if appearances be still preserved, if open scandal be not incurred, or if secret enormity should be always avoided? Is it enough for a young woman to be free

from infamy, from crimes? Between the state of virgin purity and actual prostitution are there no intermediate degrees? Is it nothing to have the soul deflowered, the fancy polluted, the passions flung into a ferment? Say, is it nothing to forfeit inward freedom and self-possession? The beauty, the dignity, the tranquillity of conscious virtue—are all these of no account? Such indeed one would think were the opinion of those, who imagine there can be no harm in a passion for places of entertainment; Because, say they, all attacks on the honour of persons who resort thither are precluded. Be that as it may, I must ever maintain, that young women of principle will be cautious of frequenting scenes where Shamefacedness, at once the companion and the guardian of female innocence, is in danger of being lost. But I add, that every prudent young woman also will be extremely wary in this particular; because,

II. The ornament we now recommend is as Wise, as it is Necessary. There is nothing so engaging as bashful beauty. The beauty that obtrudes itself, how considerable soever, will either disgust, or at most excite but inferior desires. Men are so made. They refuse their admiration, where it is courted : where it seems rather shunned, they love to bestow it. The retiring graces have been always the most attractive.

You remember the representation which Milton puts into Adam's mouth of his first meeting with our general mother. How beautiful, and how delicate !

“ She heard me thus, and though divinely
 “ brought,
“ Yet innocence and virgin modesty,
“ Her virtue and the conscience of her worth,
“ That would be woo'd, and not unsought
 “ be won,
“ Not obvious, not obtrusive, but retir'd,
“ The more desirable ; or, to say all,

" Nature herself, tho' pure of sinful thought,
 " Wrought in her so, that seeing me she turn'd.
 " I follow'd her. She what was honour knew,
 " And with obsequious majesty approv'd
 " My pleaded reason. To the nuptial bower
 " I led her blushing like the morn."

But this was only the poet's fancy.
 True. Yet the poet knew the sexes well,
 and seems to have studied yours particularly.
 He painted from the completest
 standards he could find. His picture of Eve,
 in her state of innocence, may be considered
 as the model of a woman most amiably
 feminine; in whom his imagination,
 alike exalted and correct, could figure
 nothing so alluring,

" As those graceful acts,
 " Those thousand decencies that daily flow
 " From all her words and actions."

What mind of any worth can forbear
 to be charmed with the description you
 have just heard?

To say the truth, there is not, I verily believe, a man living, who in his sober senses would not prefer a modest to an impudent woman. An impudent woman—Who can tell which is greater, the disgrace thrown upon humanity by such a character, or the honour reflected on our natures by that abhorrence, which is raised by the bare idea in every breast not totally degenerate?

Surely it deserves your notice, what pains the all-presiding power has graciously taken to show his care of female virtue, not only by impressing the minds of your sex with that deep and lively sense of reputation, which is one of its most powerful preservatives, but also by forming the minds of ours with so high an esteem for every indication of chastity in women, and with so strong a disapprobation of the contrary. That esteem, and this disapprobation, it is certain, are felt by the men, whensoever reason is per-

mitted to take place of appetite ; and these indications are perfectly and universally intelligible. I say not, that those of the last kind are always apparent, where women have given themselves up to vice ; but, I apprehend, they are so for the greater part. This breach of her most sacred law, the justice of Nature has generally branded with a look and manner peculiarly characteristic and significant ; as, on the other side, she has always (I think, always) marked the genuine feelings of modesty with a look and manner no less correspondent and expressive.

In the latter case, she seems to say to us men, pointing to her yet uncorrupted daughters, ‘ Behold these smiling innocents, whom I have graced with my fairest gifts, and committed to your protection ; behold them with love and respect ; treat them with tenderness and honour. They are timid, and want to be defended. They are frail ; O do

‘ not take advantage of their weakness.
‘ Let their fears and blushes endear them.
‘ Let their confidence in you never be
‘ abused——But is it possible, that any
‘ of you can be such barbarians, so su-
‘ premely wicked, as to abuse it? Can
‘ ye find in your hearts to despoil the
‘ gentle trusting creatures of their trea-
‘ sure, or do any thing to strip them of
‘ their native robe of virtue? Curst be
‘ the impious hand that would dare to
‘ violate the unblemished form of Chasti-
‘ ty! Thou wretch! thou ruffian! for-
‘ bear; nor venture to provoke heaven’s
‘ fiercest vengeance.’

In the other case, the same parental power, equally watchful for all her children, seems to cast an eye of awful reproach on such of her daughters as are unhappily abandoned, and, raising her voice, to address our sex to this purpose:
‘ Flee, my sons, flee these destructive Sy-
‘ rens. They smile, only to tempt; and

‘ they tempt, in order to devour. Once
 ‘ indeed they shone in many of my
 ‘ sweetest charms. These are no more.
 ‘ They have forgotten to blush; their
 ‘ foreheads are hardened into shameless-
 ‘ ness. Their eyes formerly soft, vir-
 ‘ tuous, and downcast; those very eyes
 ‘ that effused the soul of innocence,
 ‘ have learnt to stare, and roll with un-
 ‘ bounded wantonness; to dart nothing
 ‘ but unholy fire. Their hands are the
 ‘ hands of Harpies. Their feet go down
 ‘ to death, and their steps take hold
 ‘ on hell.’

This account of those wretched beings
 will be always true in part. The profligate
 and the foolish, that are taken in their
 toils, shall some time or other be sure to
 repent it. Nevertheless it must be owned,
 there are of them who, with hearts of
 adamant to the best impressions, and with-
 out any remains of natural modesty, yet
 practise the art of feigning its decent de-

meanour ; one of the strongest arguments that can be conceived in its favour !

Yes, those more accomplished ensnarers are sufficiently aware, that there is no allurements equal to that of maiden virtue ; and therefore, having lost the reality, they study to retain the appearance. In this instance, no doubt, as in numberless others, the operations of Nature may be counteracted by violence, and her most speaking features silenced by dissimulation. But ah, how much more easy, pleasant, noble, and happy, to be virtuous, than only to seem so ! That vicegerent of God within us, Conscience, will not bear the abuse calmly. All essential transgressions of order, how successful soever they may outwardly appear, shall certainly be punished by inward disquietude, and home-felt meanness. But the truth is, that the art of dissembling, in the case before us, seldom succeeds so far, as not to be seen through on many

occasions ; and when it is, the contempt and aversion produced by it, are only heightened by those attempts to impose. Of this be assured, that to the sense of decency there is nothing more disgusting, than the notion of a young woman who cannot be put out of countenance. In our sex, the character of being lost to shame is scandalous ; but in yours—who can describe the detestation it excites ?

Next to this is the dislike we feel to her who has contracted a certain briskness of air and levity of deportment, which, though by good nature, or the courtesy of custom, distinguished from the brazen front and bold attack of the prostitute, does yet, I cannot help saying, approach too near them, and can never, I am sure, be pleasing to men of sentiment. Such an air and deportment, I well know, are by many esteemed marks of spirit. It may be so. I am willing at least to believe, that no real harm is

meant by numbers who affect them. But surely they are the worst kind of affectation. I had rather a thousand times see a young lady carry her bashfulness too far, than pique herself on the freedom of her manners.

A masculine woman must be naturally an unamiable creature. I confess myself shocked, whenever I see the sexes confounded. An effeminate fellow, that, destitute of every manly sentiment, copies with inverted ambition from your sex, is an object of contempt and aversion at once. On the other hand, any young woman of better rank, that throws off all the lovely softness of her nature, and emulates the daring intrepid temper of a man—how terrible ! The transformation on either side must ever be monstrous. Is not this shadowed out to us in that particular prohibition of the Jewish law, which says, “ The woman shall not wear “ that which pertaineth unto a man :

“ neither shall a man put on a woman’s
 “ garment. For all that do so are abomi-
 “ nation unto the Lord ?” Such confu-
 sion of apparel was to be considered as
 renouncing, in effect, the distinction of
 form, which the Almighty had established
 in the creation. To this unnatural mode
 do we not sometimes observe a visible
 tendency in our days ? But what though
 the dress be kept ever so distinct, if the
 behaviour be not ; in those points, I mean,
 where the character peculiar to each sex
 seems to require a difference ? There, a
 metamorphosis in either will always of-
 fend an eye that is not greatly vitiated.
 It will do so particularly in your sex. By
 dint of assiduity and flattery, fortune and
 show, a Female Man shall sometimes suc-
 ceed strangely with the women : but to
 the men an Amazon never fails to be
 forbidding. Are none of you, my fair
 hearers, in danger of roughening into this
 ungracious figure ? How readily it is as-
 sumed, in those scenes where the ignorance

of youth co-operates with the magic of fashion, many of you perhaps will not suspect.

Men, I presume, are in general better judges than women, of the deportment of women. Whatever affects them from your quarter they feel more immediately. You slide insensibly into a certain cast of manners ; you perceive not the gradations ; you do not see yourselves at a proper distance. If the effect produced be on the whole disagreeable, self-love will not be the first to discover it. Men, it is true, are often dazzled by youth, vivacity, and beauty : but yet at times they will look at you with a cooler eye, and a closer inspection, than you apprehend ; at least, when they have opportunities of seeing you in private company.

In splendid crowds all is dissipated, because all is garish. The multiplicity of objects scatters and distracts : nothing is

felt or thought of, in the way of either serious reflexion, or serious passion. How much misjudged is an excessive fondness for such scenes! Believe me, they are not the places, where the heart is most apt to be touched.

At any rate, the majesty of the sex is sure to suffer by being seen too frequently, and too familiarly. Discreet reserve in a woman, like the distance kept by royal personages, contributes to maintain the proper reverence. Most of our pleasures are prized in proportion to the difficulty with which they are obtained. The sight of beauty may be justly reckoned in that number. Nothing can be more impolitic in young ladies, than to make it cheap. “So long,” says a lively author, “as they govern themselves by the exact rules of prudence and modesty, their lustre is like the meridian sun in its clearness, which, though less approachable, is counted more glorious; but

“ when they decline from those, they are
“ like that sun in a cloud, which, though
“ safelier gazed on, is not half so bright.”

Even the worst men are struck by the
sovereignty of female worth unambitious
of appearing. But if a young person
(supposing her dispositions in other re-
spects ever so good) will be always break-
ing loose through each domestic inclosure,
and ranging at large the wide common of
the world, those destroyers will see her in
a very different point of light. They will
consider her as lawful game, to be hunted
down without hesitation. And if her
virtue, or (which to a woman is in effect
nearly the same) her reputation, should
be lost, what will it avail the poor
wanderer, to plead that she meant only
a little harmless amusement, and never
thought of straying into the abhorred
paths of vice?

With regard to the opinion of the bet-
ter sort of men, I will tell you a secret

If in the flutter of too public a life you should at any time so far forget yourselves, as to drop that nice decorum of appearance and manner, which is expected from your sex, particularly from the younger part of it, they will be tempted to harbour suspicions which I dare not name ; that is, many of them will. The rest, who know you better, or have more charity, will be hurt to think you should expose yourselves to a degree of censure, which in reality you do not deserve. Yet none of them hardly will be kind enough to offer you a friendly hint of what so much concerns you ; not even where it might be done with the most perfect propriety. Their general inclination to good nature, their love of amusement in their turn, and their finding it most readily in the society of your sex, will dispose them to laugh with you very freely. Intimacy will lead on to a kind of attachment. They will often entertain you with no little gallantry ; sometimes per-

haps at an expence which they can ill afford. In a word, they will be mightily pleased with you—as the companions of an hour. Companions for life, if they ever think of such, they will look out for elfewhere. They will then make the necessary discrimination; I mean, if they be wise and honest enough to marry from choice. They will then try if they can find women well-bred and sober-minded at the same time, of a chearful temper with sedate manners; women, of whom they may hope that they will love home, be attached to their husbands, attentive to their families, reasonable in their wishes, moderate in their expences, and not addicted to eternal shew. Having found them, whether with or without fortune (that will never be their prime consideration) they will endeavour to gain them by another sort of style and behaviour, than they used towards you. Far other sentiments, far other emotions, will then possess them. In short, their hearts will

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be then engaged ; and if they should be happy enough to obtain the much wished for objects, then, with a joy unfelt before, they will form the tenderest of all connexions ; leaving you where they found you, as widely removed as ever from the truest pleasures, and the fairest prospects, that humanity knows ; the pleasures which are enjoyed at home, and the prospects which include a family.

But many of you, I fear, will smile at all this, trusting to the flatterer Beauty, that, whenever you shall please, you cannot fail to fix your men ; and so, in the gaiety of your spirits, you continue to exhibit that beauty as usual, and to dance along through the giddy maze. Not to insist, at present, how precarious and transient an attendant this arch-flatterer has always proved ; I must remind you, that a face hackneyed in the public eye, how striking soever when first seen, or how handsome soever it may yet re-

main, loses much of its power to please. Every new appearance takes something from its charms; and for one instance wherein this kind of exhibition succeeds, how many might be named in which young women once extolled, and run after every where, have lived to tread the beaten round, unpraised, neglected, forlorn!

No, those large promiscuous circles are not the scenes where the heart is commonly interested. Virtuous love, like true devotion, flies from noise, seeks retreat, and delights to indulge itself, unobserved by all but the object of its veneration. That respectful modesty, which attends it on the part of the man, is maintained and exalted by nothing so much as an unaffected bashfulness on the woman's side. But this last, which properly speaking is the flower of female chastity, is of a nature so delicate and tender, as always to thrive best in places

the least frequented. What pity, when, instead of being sheltered and cherished with care, it is heedlessly exposed to the wanton gaze of every wandering eye, to the cruel hand of every rude, or of every sly invader ! Can any entertainment, or any admiration, the public has power to offer, compensate the loss of this enchanting quality ?

Say not that it is incompatible with politeness, or with affability. We have seen it accompanied with the sweetest affability, and with the most perfect politeness. Depend upon it, that the best breeding is not learnt by rambling from one assembly, and one diversion, to another ; but by living among the best bred people, by cultivating a fund of goodness in the heart, and possessing the advantage of a well educated mind.

After what you have heard, I hope you will not imagine, that the Bashfulness I

plead for tends to obstruct any one view, which it becomes a wise and worthy woman to entertain. Some men, I confess, may be flattered by forward advances from those of your sex, whom the ingenious Mr. Richardson used to term Seekers. But is there not reason to apprehend, that when they come to reflect coolly, their esteem will not be lasting, where the foundation of it is not natural? There are other men, it is but fair to tell you, who will appear delighted with this kind of courtship, pretend the highest regard, pay you a world of compliments by which they mean nothing, and swear to the first worthless companion they meet, that you have a design upon them. Can you bear the thought of exposing yourselves to such an imputation? How mortifying, on those occasions, to hear a girl seriously boast of her imaginary conquests! How weak in her, to fancy that every man who flatters her, not to say every man who treats her with the attention to which your sex are entitled, is a lover!

I speak not of those more deserving females, whose peace of mind has been cruelly sported with by a species of poltrons, the disgrace of their sex, the reverse of all that is brave or humane; whose business and boast it is, to inveigle the affections of virtuous women by endless obsequiousness, and solemn professions, that seem to imply every thing just and kind, till they have undone the credulous fair ones, whom they then barbarously consign to infamy and woe: or else, finding that they have gone too far in the pursuit of those who will not yield but on honourable terms, to which they have not the spirit or probity to agree, they poorly and basely relinquish them, after having stolen their hearts. Happy creatures, to be so relinquished, though not happy to be so inveigled! What an escape have ye made from wretches that never deserved you! If your honest pride be hurt at first, as it cannot fail of being, that very pride will soon

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inspire you with a generous contempt ;
the only sensation fit to be retained on
such a subject.

To return to those of your sex, whom a
rage for amusement and admiration has
robbed of one of the finest ornaments that
can adorn them, the Shamefacedness I have
been endeavouring to inculcate. After
having said so much to show how highly
they are to blame ; what shall I say to
those, whose duty it is to advise them
better, but who have always neglected it ?
Surely it might be thought, that such of
their female acquaintance, and such espe-
cially of their female relations as are
advanced in life, would, from their supe-
rior store of judgment and observation,
be friendly enough to communicate to
those ignorant or unexperienced young
creatures, some salutary counsel on this
and other important articles. I know
they will excuse themselves, by pleading
the difficulty of the task, I own it diffi-

cult. To advise well was always so; and who can be sure of advising successfully? Is it therefore never to be attempted? In the present case, I cannot doubt but good counsel, offered with prudence and affection, would often succeed.

St. Paul, who held it not unworthy of an Apostle to enter with the greatest particularity into the concerns of common life, directs Titus to remind the aged women of their duty on this very head. His words are remarkable: "Speak thou the things that become sound doctrine;"—among the rest—"that the aged women may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children"—What follows?—"to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home." The precept indeed points to young women in the state of wedlock. But will any suppose the apostle meant to exclude women yet unmarried from that part of it, which, on his principles, must necessarily be ap-

plicable to them? That women who, having families of their own, go much abroad, and affect to shine any where but in their proper sphere, are peculiarly to blame, must, I think, be acknowledged. But will you thence infer, that they who have none are at liberty to stroll about perpetually, to prefer every place to home, and neglect the most respectable virtues, the most valuable accomplishments, for the parade of dress, the display of beauty, and the tricks of affectation?

It is truly sad to see so many young ladies, showing themselves every day in the markets of Vanity, who by a proper deportment elsewhere might render themselves agreeable and happy; to see them trifling away the opportunities of doing both, and sacrificing to a false ambition the real importance of their sex. But it is no less surprising than sad, to find amongst women of age and experience so few, comparatively speaking, who have

the conscience or the humanity to contribute to their reformation and welfare.

Imagine a set of chaste matrons, anciently mothers in this metropolis, who lived and died in sacred obscurity, were seldom found from their own houses, but placed their humble glory in shining there, particularly in breeding their children to every thing prudent and praiseworthy ; imagine them for a little to return to life, and to observe unknown the manners of the present age. When, amongst other things, they saw the daughters of many a citizen, glittering in gorgeous apparel not paid for, rolling their eyes on every side through a large assembly, studying by every childish art to draw the notice of the men, contending with one another who should be most the objects of attention, catching with a kind of triumph each transient glance, nor showing the smallest uneasiness even to be stared at by the most licentious eye, or to

be blown upon by the most corrupted breath of every vile betrayer—I pursue the description no farther—what would our venerable spectators think of their posterity! What grief would fill their hearts on the occasion! But how great would be their astonishment and horror, when informed, that numbers of those young persons, whose behaviour was so unbecoming, had not been taught by their mothers, their grand-mothers, or any other friend in the world, one solid lesson of wisdom or frugality, of female decorum or Amiable Reserve!

S E R M O N IV.

O N

FEMALE VIRTUE.

THE
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OF
THE
AMERICAN
MUSEUM
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NATURAL
HISTORY
NEW YORK
1881

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S E R M O N I V.

On Female Virtue.

1. TIM. ii. 8, 9.

*I will—that women adorn themselves with
Sobriety.*

A Plain dress you have often found extremely pleasing. What such a dress is to the person; that, and much more, is Sobriety to the mind. Sobriety is a sort of spiritual vesture entirely void of show; substantial, home-spun, and hardly; calculated to defend against the injuries of the world, as well as to cover the nakedness of the soul; proper to be worn every day, and not unfit for any place where a reasonable being ought to appear; perfectly decent, and to a judicious eye extremely beautiful; in a word,

so indispensable and becoming, that she who is without it has been ever deemed, by the virtuous and wise, an object of deformity, loathing, and wretchedness. Like every thing else of greatest value, its worth is best known by its loss. That this quality, which like your daily clothing answers so many useful and necessary ends, should like that too not strike the generality of beholders, reflects in my opinion honour on your sex. It would be more esteemed, were it less common. And here I must complain of those men who will allow little or no merit to a woman for being sober; when, if she were not, they would condemn her loudly. If the vice be scandalous, can the virtue fail of being honourable?

To argue from an instance somewhat similar. Because disobedience to parents is unnatural and vile, does it follow that filial piety deserves little or no praise? But the temptations to this

crime are usually inconsiderable, frequently none at all; whereas to indecorum, intemperance, and incontinence, it is certain many women are under strong temptations: it is also certain, that many have given way to them; it is probable there are but few, whose virtue in those particulars has not been exposed to very dangerous snares: yet the far greater part preserve it entire; and shall we deny them our tribute of approbation? Forbid it Generosity and Justice!

The speaking with contempt of what is commonly called Negative Virtue, is often the mere rant of an affected philosophy. To make some allowance for the condition of humanity, were surely more modest and candid. Where does he live, and what is his name, who dares be confident, that in any given circumstance of critical trial his own resolutions would remain unshaken? For vice and immorality, though there may be alleviations, there

can be no excuse. But yet, on the other hand, situated as mortals are, a moral or inoffensive conduct is fairly entitled to commendation from mortals. Your situation, my young friends, demands much candour from us, and mighty caution in you.

The ornament of Sobriety, which comes next to be considered, is by no means a cheap one. But though it be purchased with difficulty, it is lost with ease. To preserve it, will require the unremitted exercise of prudence, vigilance, and severe circumspection: or to speak more properly, these are parts of this quality, which in effect is of a mixed and comprehensive nature. To describe it at large, is not my design. The attempt would lead into a discussion much too dry and uninteresting. If possible, I would engage your attention to truth, and your hearts to goodness, in a different way; by sentiment, persuasion, and the native influ-

ence of fraternal counsel. Come then, my sisters, and hearken to a brother, while he endeavours to shew you on one side those things which you ought principally to shun, in order to the maintaining of your Sobriety; and to point out on the other that positive discipline, which must co-operate for this purpose. At present we can only undertake the former of these points. But before we proceed to that, let me desire you to take notice with what propriety the apostle's ideas seem to rise one above another. He begins with that which is most directly obvious, and the very first precaution to be observed, Modesty of Apparel. Then he mentions Shamefacedness; which, though sometimes less apparent, yet when observed cannot fail of recommending itself to every eye, and without which decency of garb is mere affectation. Shamefacedness, as he has ranked it, appears like a kind of finer covering, the virgin veil of Chastity, to be

thrown over all the rest. But that it may be a veil in the best sense, a holy veil and no mask, he subjoins Sobriety as the more inward habit (so to speak) which must support and give value to the whole ; or, to drop the metaphor, as that internal and prevailing character, by which every part of a woman's dress and demeanour must ever be regulated. Now to cultivate this character, it is of infinite consequence,

In the first place, to avoid Dangerous Connexions. If that be not done, what is there on earth, or in heaven, that can save you ? Of miraculous interposition I think not at present. She can have no right to expect it, who throws herself into the broad way of temptation. What those dangerous connexions are, it may not be always easy to explain, when it becomes a question in real life. Unhappily for young women, it is a question sometimes of very nice decision. Cases there are, in which nothing can be clearer.

The man that behaves with open rudeness, the man that avowedly laughs at virtue, the man that impudently pleads for vice; such a man is to be shunned like a rattle-snake. In this case, "The woman that deliberates is lost." What! would you parley with the destroyer, when he gives you warning? Then you are not ensnared, you knowingly and willingly expose yourselves. If you be poisoned, if you be lost; your folly is without excuse, and your destruction without alleviation.

But in this manner none will proceed, except wretches alike licentious and imprudent. Of artful men the approaches will be silent and slow; all will be soft insinuation: or else they will put on a blunt face of seeming good humour, the appearance of honest frankness, drawing you to every scene of dissipation with a kind of obliging violence, should violence of any

kind be necessary. If they be also agreeable in their persons, or lively in their conversation ; above all, if they wear the air of gentlemen, which, unfortunately for your sex, is too often the case ; then indeed your danger is extreme. Thus far the trap is concealed. You apprehend nothing ; your unsuspecting hearts begin to slide : they are gone before you are aware. The men I am speaking of perceive their advantage the moment it appears. I have supposed them destitute of worth. If they be also unchecked by fear, what can preserve you ? A sense of reputation ? the dread of ruin ? Perhaps they may ; but perhaps not. They have often, no doubt, come in to prevent the last excess, And, but for such restraints, what would become of many a woman who is not under that best one, religious principle ? The experiment, however, you will own is hazardous. Multitudes have trusted to it, and been undone.

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But do those, who in the world's sense are not undone, escape, think ye, unhurt; unhurt in their health and spirits, in their serenity and self-enjoyment, in their sobriety of mind and habits of self-controul? You cannot think it. Very seldom at least can you suppose, that, where there is much sensibility of temper, an ill placed passion shall not leave behind it, in a youthful breast, great disorder and deep disquietude.

But how, you will ask, is the snare to be eluded, hidden as it frequently is? Not so hidden throughout, as to be invisible, unless you will shut your eyes. Is it not your business to enquire into the character of the man that professes an attachment? Or is character nothing? Is there no essential difference between a man of decency and honour, or who has all along passed for such, and a man who is known to lead an irregular life, or who is suspected however to be the smiling foe

of female virtue? May you not learn, if you please, with whom the person in question associates? Or is a man's choice of company nothing? If not resolved to be blind, you may surely discover whether such a person proceeds by little and little to take off the vifor, and appear what he is, by loose sentiments, indecent advances, an ambiguous style, an alarming assurance, "foolish talking, and jesting which "is not convenient."—I blush for numbers of your sex, who not only express no displeasure at these things, but by a loud laugh, or childish titter, or foolish smiler, or some other indication of a light mind, show real satisfaction, perhaps high complacence.

Another thing, no less abominable, I cannot forbear to mention. How common is it to see young ladies, who pass for women of reputation, admitting into their company in public places, and with visible tokens of civility and pleasure, men,

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whom the moment before they saw herding with creatures of infamous name ! Gracious God, what a defiance to the laws of piety, prudence, character, decorum ! What an insult, in effect, to every man and woman of virtue in the world ! What a palpable encouragement to vice and dishonour ! What a desperate attempt to pull down, in appearance, and with their own hands, the only partition that divides them from the most profligate of their sex ! Between the bold and the abandoned woman there may still remain, notwithstanding such behaviour, a distinction in the world's eye ; but we scruple not to declare, that religion, purity, delicacy, make none.

To return from this digression, if it be one, we will allow it possible to put cases wherein no particular rules of discovery, no determinate modes of judgment, will enable a young woman, by her own unassisted skill, to discern the dangers that

lie in her way. But can a young woman be justly excused, or can she fairly excuse herself, if, where all is at stake, she call not in the joint aid of wise suspicion, friendly counsel, and grave experience, together with prayers for God's protection more than ordinarily fervent?

But, methinks, I hear some of you ask, with an air of earnest curiosity, Do not reformed libertines then make the best husbands? I am sorry for the question. I am doubly sorry, whenever it is started by a Virtuous Woman. I will not wound the ear of modesty by drawing minutely the character of a libertine: but give me leave to answer your enquiry, by asking a question or two in my turn. In the first place, we will suppose such a one really reformed, so far as to treat the woman he marries with esteem and fidelity; and that he gives up for ever his old companions, at least as to any chosen intimacy, or preference of their company to hers. We

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grant it possible; we rejoice when it happens. It is certainly the best atonement that can be made for his former conduct. But now let me ask you, or rather let me desire you to ask your own hearts, without any regard to the opinions of the world, which is most desirable on the score of sentiment, on the score of that respect which you owe to yourselves, to your friends, to your sex, to order, rectitude, and honour; the pure unexhausted affection of a man who has not by intemperance and debauchery corrupted his principles, impaired his constitution, enslaved himself to appetite, submitted to share with the vilest and lowest of mankind the mercenary embraces of harlots, contributed to embolden guilt, to harden vice, to render the retreat from a life of scandal and misery more hopeless; who never laid snares for beauty, never betrayed the innocence that trusted him, never abandoned any fond creature to want and despair, never hurt the reputation of a

woman, never disturbed the peace of families, or defied the laws of his country, or set at nought the prohibition of his God;—which, I say, is most desirable, the affection of such a man, or that of him who has probably done all this, who has certainly done a great part of it, and who has nothing now to offer you, but the shattered remains of his health, and of his heart? How any of you may feel on this subject, I cannot say. But if, judging as a man, I believed, what I have often heard, that the generality of women would prefer the latter, I know not any thing that could sink them so low in my esteem.

That he who has been formerly a rake may after all prove a very tolerable husband, as the world goes, I have said already that I do not dispute. But I would ask, in the next place, is this commonly to be expected? Is there no danger that such a man will be tempted by the power

of long habit to return to his old ways ; or that the insatiable love of variety, which he has indulged so freely, will some time or other lead him astray from the finest woman in the world ? Will not the very idea of a restraint, which he could never brook while single, make him only the more impatient of it when married ? Will he have the better opinion of his wife's virtue, that he has conversed chiefly with women who had none, and with men amongst whom it was a favourite system, that the sex are all alike ? But it is a painful topic. Let the women who are so connected make the best of their condition ; and let us go on to something else. If you, my honoured hearers, would preserve your sobriety, I would warn you,

In the second place, against a Dissipated Life ; into which many, who I verily believe have no ill intentions, are

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unhappily drawn by one engagement or another. Youth, sprightliness, the love of society, the love of shining, (the last particularly strong in minds where imagination predominates) joined with a taste for amusement, which the circumscribed situation of the sex serves perhaps only to increase—all these put together lead them very readily into such a track; most especially if their education has lain in that line, or if their connexions, whether natural or accidental, have concurred to strengthen the bias. But how innocent soever it may be in the first instance, who does not know, that in its after-consequences it is often to the last degree hurtful?

Does it not manifestly breed an impatience of home, and such a propensity to show, as, rather than not be gratified, shall balk the most important duties, and court the most improper company? Does it not tend directly to expence and profu-

sion? Does it not unavoidably cherish
 the passion for idleness and sauntering, so
 inconsistent with every thing solid, use-
 ful, and improving? Not to speak now
 of the prejudice done by it to the health
 and constitution; is such a temper, and
 such a conduct, agreeable to the great
 rules of moderation? Will that mind be
 acquainted with wisdom, which is averse
 to thought? Will self-government be
 her study, who flies from self-inspection?
 Can Religion or Virtue hope to make any
 lasting impression on a spirit, that by per-
 petual agitation is wrought up into mere
 froth? What imaginable folly is there
 that may not find its way into a heart, like
 the garden of the sluggard, thrown open
 to every incursion? If your mornings be
 spent in rambling and dressing, your even-
 ings in visits and cards, or public enter-
 tainments; if this be the general tenor of
 your transactions, on which side, I beseech
 you, can the balance be expected to lie at
 the bottom of the account?

But that perhaps is not your care, 'What have the young and the gay to do, but to divert themselves?' Indeed? Were you sent then into this world for no other purpose? Do you design to apply to nothing serious? 'Yes, certainly, when we are settled, and have families.' But pray, tell me: To act your parts properly then, is there no preparation necessary now? Is roving about continually, the way to grow either fond of domestic employments, or fit for them? Will neglecting the lesser affairs committed to you at present, dispose or qualify you for a larger sphere of activity hereafter?

But have we not often seen young women, that were thoughtless and profuse, turn out very prudent and economical wives? We have; and what then? Would you build a system of action on events so precarious and unlikely? Because by the force of genius, or a felicity of circumstances, boys who were good

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for little or nothing at school, have not unfrequently, in process of time, shot up into men of ability or spirit, would you thence infer that youth may safely trifle away their early years?

But is it certain, after all, that you are to change your state, as well as your character? Will the train of life we are considering recommend you much to young men? I have conversed with many of them on this subject. Shall I tell you their opinions? Some, I find, would like a sprightly companion in marriage, but none a dissipated one; and all of them, to a man, dread a woman of expence. I say not, that it is right in this case to count the cost too nicely; but men that are not very violent lovers, or very great fools, will not overlook it. Our sex of late years have been by many thought more backward than formerly to enter into the holy bands of wedlock; and what I hint at has been assigned as a principal cause,

It is too common, I confess, to hear those who have been addicted to vagrant pleasures, and vain profusion, plead the smallness of their fortunes as an excuse for not marrying; when, if they connected themselves with women of sobriety and discretion, it is perhaps demonstrable that they would live cheaper. But what, say they, if, hoping to find a help meet, we should wed our ruin? I answer them, Choose the better. Shall I give you their reply? ‘The ladies of the present age are so immoderately expensive’—You may guess the rest.

But it is not only such men that speak this language. There are of a different character not a few, who, strongly attached to the worthier part of the sex, wish for nothing so much as an honourable connexion with them, but are restrained by the very consideration in question. We would willingly convince them, that they carry it too far. They appeal to

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facts, and persist in the argument. We are weary of the dispute. It is inconceivable what frivolous articles of parade are insisted on by some women, of whom better things might be expected. But rivalry in show is the ruling passion of the times; and how much is it nourished by dissipation!

I cannot leave this point without observing, that one of the worst consequences attending such a course is its throwing many young ladies into the company of women, who with the general reputation of virtue, or under the particular shelter of matrimony, are often the very quintessence of vice; a set of smooth pernicious tempters, like Satan to Eve, winding themselves by flattery into the hearts of those her heedless daughters, descanting on their beauty, perfections, prospects, and I know not what; first exciting, and then gratifying their youthful curiosity, with such suggestions, and such tales,

as set their fancies all on fire ; by which any little structure of modesty, that Nature and Education may have raised, is consumed in a moment. Which contribute most to their fall from innocence, those she serpents, or the male ones mentioned before, I will not determine ; but remember, I have warned you against both.

Permit me farther, on this occasion, just to remind you of poor Dinah. Secure as you may think yourselves, none of you, I suppose, have been trained more virtuously than it is probable she was under the eye of a pious father. But, alas ! the spirit of wandering seized her. “ She “ went forth to see the daughters of the “ land.” She met a betrayer, and lost her honour. But I proceed,

In the third place, to caution you against that fatal poison to virtue, which is conveyed by Profligate and by Improper Books.

When entertainment is made the vehicle of instruction, nothing surely can be more harmless, agreeable, or useful. To prohibit young minds the perusal of any writings, where Wisdom addresses the affections in the language of the imagination, may be sometimes well meant, but must be always injudicious. Some such writings undoubtedly there are; the offspring of real genius enlightened by knowledge of the world, and prompted, it is to be hoped, by zeal for the improvement of youth.

Happy indeed, beyond the vulgar storytelling tribe, and highly to be praised, is he who, to fine sensibilities and a lively fancy superadding clear and comprehensive views of men and manners, writes to the heart with simplicity and chasteness, through a series of adventures well conducted, and relating chiefly to scenes in ordinary life; where the solid joys of Virtue, and her sacred sorrows, are strong-

ly contrasted with the hollownefs and the horrors of vice ; where, by little unexpected yet natural incidents of the tender and domestic kind, fo peculiarly fitted to touch the foul, the moft important leffons are impreffed, and the moft generous sentiments awakened ; where, to fay no more, diftrefs occafioned often by indiscretions, confiftent with many degrees of worth, yet clouding it for the time, is worked up into a ftorm, fuch as to call forth the principles of fortitude and wifdom, confirming and brightening them by that exertion ; till at length the burfting tempeft is totally, or in a great meafure difpelled, fo that the hitherto fufpended and agitated reader is either relieved entirely, and delighted even to transport, or has left upon his mind at the conclufion a mixture of virtuous fadnefs, which ferves to faften the moral deeper, and to produce an unufual fobriety in all his paffions.

Amongst the few works of this kind which I have seen, I cannot but look on those of Mr. Richardson as well entitled to the first rank ; an author, of whom an indisputable judge has with equal truth and energy pronounced, “ that he taught “ the passions to move at the command of “ reason :” I will venture to add, an author, to whom your sex are under singular obligations for his uncommon attention to their best interests ; but particularly for presenting, in a character sustained throughout with inexpressible pathos and delicacy, the most exalted standard of female excellence that was ever held up to their imitation. I would be understood to except that part of *Clarissa’s* conduct, which the author meant to exhibit as exceptionable. Setting this aside, we find in her character a beauty, a sweetness, an artlessness—what shall I say more ?—a sanctity of sentiment and manner, which, I own for my part, I have never seen equalled in any book of that

fort; yet such, at the same time, as appears no way impracticable for any woman who is ambitious of excelling.

Beside the beautiful productions of that incomparable pen, there seem to me to be very few, in the style of Novel, that you can read with safety, and yet fewer that you can read with advantage.—What shall we say of certain books, which we are assured (for we have not read them) are in their nature so shameful, in their tendency so pestiferous, and contain such rank treason against the royalty of Virtue, such horrible violation of all decorum, that she who can bear to peruse them must in her soul be a prostitute, let her reputation in life be what it will? But can it be true—say, ye chaste stars, that with innumerable eyes inspect the midnight behaviour of mortals—can it be true, that any young woman, pretending to decency, should endure for a moment to

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look on this infernal brood of futility and lewdness ?

Nor do we condemn those writings only, that, with an effrontery which defies the laws of God and men, carry on their very forehead the mark of the beast. We consider the general run of Novels as utterly unfit for you. Instruction they convey none. They paint scenes of pleasure and passion altogether improper for you to behold, even with the mind's eye. Their descriptions are often loose and luscious in a high degree; their representations of love between the sexes are almost universally overstrained. All is dotage, or despair; or else ranting swelled into burlesque. In short, the majority of their lovers are either mere lunatics, or mock-heroes. A sweet sensibility, a charming tenderness, a delightful anguish, exalted generosity, heroic worth, and refinement of thought; how seldom are these best ingredients of virtuous love

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mixed with any judgment or care in the composition of their principal characters !

In the Old Romance the passion appeared with all its enthusiasm. But then it was the enthusiasm of honour ; for love and honour were there the same. The men were sincere, magnanimous, and noble ; the women were patterns of chastity, dignity, and affection. They were only to be won by real heroes ; and this title was founded in protecting, not in betraying, the sex. The proper merit with them consisted in the display of disinterested goodness, undaunted fortitude, and unalterable fidelity. The turn of those books was influenced by the genius of the times in which they were composed ; as that, on the other hand, was nourished by them. The characters they drew were, no doubt, often heightened beyond nature ; and the incidents they related, it is certain, were commonly blended with

the most ridiculous extravagance. At present, however, I believe they may be read with perfect safety, if indeed there be any who choose to look into them.

The times in which we live are in no danger of adopting a system of romantic virtue. The parents of the present generation, what with selling their sons and daughters in marriage, and what with teaching them by every possible means the glorious principles of Avarice, have contrived pretty effectually to bring down from its former flights that idle, youthful, unprofitable passion, which has for its object personal attractions, in preference to all the wealth of the world. With the successful endeavours of those profoundly politic parents, the levity of dissipation, the vanity of parade, and the fury of gaming, now so prevalent, have concurred to cure completely in the fashionable of both sexes any tendency to mutual fondness.

What has a modish young gentleman to do with those antiquated notions of gallantry, that were connected with veneration for female excellence, invincible honour, and unspotted fame? Is it not enough for him, if he intend to strike the matrimonial bargain, that by himself, or an old cunning father, he can drive a good one, to get possession of some woman, whose fortune joined to his own, if any he have, shall enable him to glitter in public, and in private to gratify other favourite inclinations more freely? Provided these grand points are gained, in the person he thus trafficks for to be the partner of his life, what signifies her appearance, her understanding, or her character? And those Fine Ladies who seek conquest only for show, too well instructed in the superior consequence of that to put any value on so simple a thing as a Heart, merely for its own sake; what else have they to mind but securing, by whatever arts, such settlements as shall place them,

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when married, on a level with their companions, or if possible above them, in the all-important articles of gaiety and splendor? As to men's hazarding any thing in the defence of girls who may take it into their heads to think of reputation, delicacy, sentiment, and other such exploded ideas; what can be so foolish?—although to hazard their lives in a drunken quarrel for a prostitute might perhaps be brave!

That in so polite an age the elevations of love, the sanctity of truth, and the majesty of virtue, should pass for knight-errantry, cannot be surprising; nor is it any wonder, that the very best things, in the productions last mentioned, should be no way interesting to a modern reader, whose taste and manners are formed on standards far different. Some however may not be displeased to hear the opinion of no less a judge than Milton concerning them. It seems they were one of his early studies, and that on a moral account. As his

words to this purpose are remarkable, and not much known, I shall take the liberty to quote part of them. “ I betook me
“ among those lofty fables and romances,
“ which recount in solemn cantos the
“ deeds of knighthood founded by our
“ victorious kings, and from hence had in
“ renown over all Christendom. There
“ I read it in the oath of every knight,
“ that he should defend to the expence of
“ his blood, or of his life, if it so befell
“ him, the honour and chastity of virgin
“ or matron. From whence even then I
“ learnt, what a noble virtue chastity sure
“ must be, to the defence of which so
“ many worthies by such a dear adventure
“ of themselves had sworn. And if
“ I found in the story afterwards any of
“ them by word or deed breaking that
“ oath, I judged it the same fault of the
“ poet as that which is attributed to Homer,
“ to have written undecent things
“ of the Gods. Only this my mind gave
“ me, that every free and gentle spirit,

“ without that oath, ought to be born a
 “ knight, nor needed to expect the guilt
 “ spur, or the laying of a sword upon
 “ his shoulder, to stir him up both by his
 “ counsel and his arm to secure and pro-
 “ tect the weakness of any attempted
 “ chastity.”

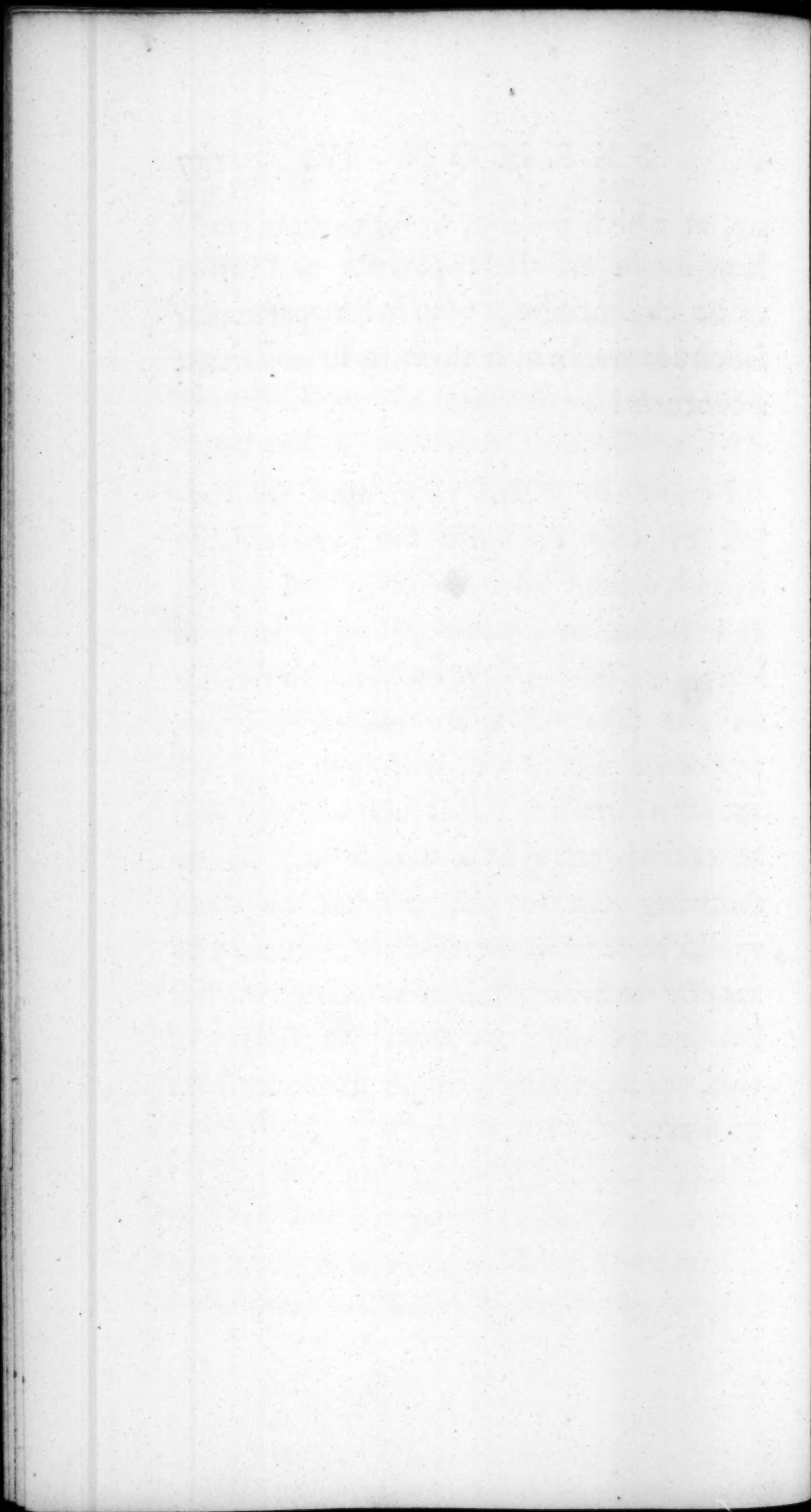
To come back to the species of writing
 which so many young women are apt to
 doat upon, the offspring of our present
 Novelists, I mean the greater part; with
 whom we may join the common herd of
 Play-writers. Beside the remarks already
 made on the former, is it not manifest
 with respect to both, that such books lead
 to a false taste of life and happiness; that
 they represent vices as frailties, and frail-
 ties as virtues; that they engender notions
 of love unspeakably perverting and in-
 flammatory; that they overlook in a great
 measure the finest part of the passion,
 which one would suspect the authors had
 never experienced; that they turn it most

commonly into an affair of wicked or of frivolous gallantry ; that on many occasions they take off from the worst crimes committed in the prosecution of it, the horror which ought ever to follow them ; on some occasions actually reward those very crimes, and almost on all leave the female readers with this persuasion at best, that it is their business to get husbands at any rate, and by whatever means ? Add to the account, that repentance for the foulest injuries which can be done the sex, is generally represented as the pang, or rather the start, of a moment ; and holy wedlock converted into a sponge, to wipe out at a single stroke every stain of guilt and dishonour, which it was possible for the hero of the piece to contract.—Is this a kind of reading calculated to improve the principles, or preserve the Sobriety, of female minds ? How much are those young women to be pitied, that have no wise parents or faithful tutors to direct them in relation to the books which

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are, or which are not, fit for them to read !
How much are those parents and tutors
to be commended, who with particular
solicitude watch over them in so important
a concern !

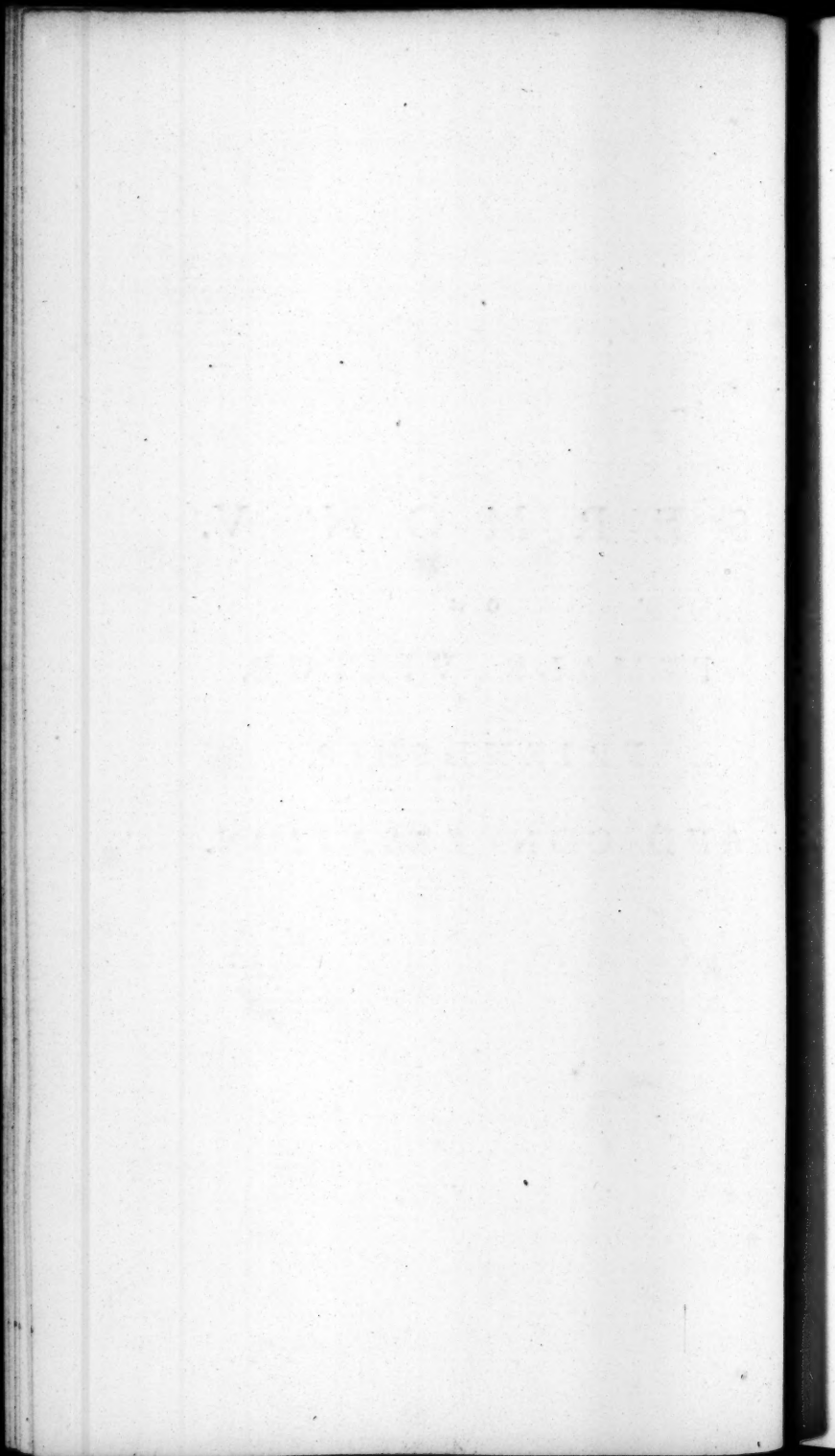
I conclude with saying, that the sub-
ject of this discourse has unavoidably
suggested some ideas, which, had we not
undertaken to address young women at
large, we should have certainly suppressed
for the sake of more modest natures,
whom we would not willingly pain, no
not for a moment. But such we hope will
be candid enough to excuse us, if, by
throwing out to others what to them
would have been unnecessary, we may be
happily instrumental in rescuing were it
but one of their sex from the slavery of
vice, or defending a single innocent from
its snares.



S E R M O N V.

O N

FEMALE VIRTUE,
FRIENDSHIP,
AND CONVERSATION.



S E R M O N V.

On Female Virtue, Friendship, and
Conversation.

1. TIM. ii. 8, 9.

*I will—that women adorn themselves with
Sobriety.*

COL. iv. 6.

*Let your Speech be always with Grace,
seasoned with Salt.*

TO preserve the Sobriety enjoined by our apostle, there is required a positive discipline, as well as the negative part already explained. Be not alarmed at the name of Discipline. In what we are going to propose you will find nothing forbidding or harsh. We do not, you may believe, wish to see you cut off from

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the friendly intercourse and innocent delights of society, confined to convents, as millions of your sex most unnaturally are in popish countries, and there condemned to the idle yet fatiguing task of a devotion unreasonable in many respects, uninteresting in most, feeble for want of temptation, visionary and dry at the same time. The genuine intention of piety was certainly to make its disciples amiable, useful, and happy; to give solidity to every virtue, and grace to every relation of human life. Is it possible to reflect on the prodigious multitudes of women shut up in those dens of superstition, without feeling horror at a system which, under the guise of superior sanctity, sacrifices to hopeless solitude, frequently in all the flower of youth and beauty, such swarms of helpless beings; who, had they remained in the world, might have been the ornament of their own sex, the delight of ours, the mothers of a numerous race, and blessings to every country where they dwell?

Of the colours with which this cruel practice is disguised by the church of Rome we are not ignorant: and we can even conceive, that the prepossessions of art, and the softenings of habit; their commerce with one another, their employments in their prison, and often, I doubt not, the ardour of a well-meaning though much mistaken zeal; that all these may have the power to reconcile many of them to a state, otherwise gloomy beyond expression. But what shall be said for the situation of the rest; and what can justify the flagrant opposition of such a system to the sacred laws of social duty, and the truly benevolent, joyful, and active spirit of the religion of Jesus, as taught and exemplified by himself and his apostles?

But to proceed in our plan. From dangerous connexions, from a dissipated life, and from books of a corrupting tendency, we attempted to put you upon your guard

in our last discourse. In the present we will endeavour to point out that Society or Conversation, and in some following ones those Talents or Accomplishments, which will contribute at once to fortify you against such snares, if they should fall in your way; to subdue any propensities that might expose you too rashly to their influence; to strengthen all your virtuous resolves; and to supply inexhausted sources of solid, rational, and refined entertainment.

As to the Conversation which you ought with these views to cultivate, it may be proper,

First of all, to say somewhat concerning those Early Friendships with one another, that usually lead you to the most intimate communications. I take it for granted, there is no young woman who has not, or wishes not to have, a companion of her own sex, to whom she may unbosom

herself on every occasion. That there are women capable of friendship with women, I cannot, for my part, question in the least. I have seen indubitable proofs of it, and those carried as far as seemed compatible with the imperfections of our common nature. I know it is questioned by many men ; while others believe, that it happens exceedingly seldom. Between married and unmarried women, I hope it happens very often. Whether it does so between those that are single, I confess myself a little doubtful. The preacher will be probably charged with partiality to his own sex, when he adds, that, so far as he has been able to observe, young men have appeared more frequently susceptible of a generous and steady friendship for each other, than females as yet unconnected ; especially if the latter have had, or been supposed to have, pretensions to beauty not yet adjusted by the public.

Having professed himself however, what (as often as truth will permit him) he really is, an advocate for the sex, and this being the feature in their character which seems to him the most unfavourable, he is willing to find out whether in their frame and condition, compared with those of the men, there be any circumstances which may help towards an apology; and he argues in the following manner.

The state of matrimony is necessary to the support, order, and comfort of society. But it is a state, that subjects the women to a great variety of solicitude and pain. Nothing could carry them through it with any tolerable satisfaction or spirit, but very strong and almost unconquerable attachments. To produce these, is it not fit they should be peculiarly sensible to the attention and regards of the men? Upon the same ground, does it not seem agreeable to the purposes of Providence that the securing of this attention, and these re-

gards, should be a principal aim? But can such an aim be pursued without frequent competition? And will not that too readily occasion jealousy, envy, and all the unamiable effects of mutual rivalry? I mean, without the restraints of superior worth and sentiment. But can these be ordinarily expected from the prevailing turn of female education, or from the little pains that women, as well as other human beings, commonly take to controul themselves, and to act nobly? In this last respect, the sexes appear pretty much on the same footing: in others, it is manifest, that the nature and situation of the men are very different. Their constitution of mind, no less than of body, is for the most part hardy and rough. By means of both, by the demands of life, and by the impulse of passion, they are engaged in a vast diversity of pursuits, from which your sex are precluded by decorum, by softness, and by fear. This diversity of daily pursuits, joined with the multipli-

city of female objects that freer modes of living present to their imagination, and the power they have of unlimited choice whenever they are disposed to make it (a power which Nature probably, and Custom certainly, have denied to the others); all this put together must in the case of our sex be productive of very different effects.

Do I mean by this reasoning to justify in yours the indulgence of those little, and, I must needs say, in many instances, base passions towards one another, with which they have been so generally charged? God forbid. I only mean to represent such passions in the first approach, and while not entertained, as less criminal than the men are apt to state them; and to prove, that, in their attachments to each other, the latter have not always that merit above the poor women, which they are apt to claim. In the mean time it will be your business, by emulating them

where they appear good-natured and disinterested, to disprove their imputation, and to shew a temper open to Friendship, as well as to Love.

To talk much of the latter is natural for both ; to talk much of the former, is considered as one way of doing themselves honour. Friendship, they well know, is that dignified form, which in speculation at least every heart must reverence. But in friendship, as in religion, which in many respects it resembles, speculation is often substituted in the place of practice. People fancy themselves possessed of the thing, and hope that others will fancy so too, because they are fond of the name, and have learnt to talk about it with plausibility. Such talk indeed imposes, till experience gives it the lie.

To say the truth, there seems in either sex but little of what a fond imagination, unacquainted with the fallhood of the

world, and warmed by affections which its selfishness has not yet chilled, would reckon Friendship. In theory the standard is raised too high ; yet, methinks, I would not have it set much lower. I would not, on any account, have the honest sensibilities of ingenuous nature checked by the over-cautious documents of political prudence. No advantage, obtained by such frigidity, can compensate the want of those warm effusions of the heart into the bosom of a friend, which are doubtless among the most exquisite pleasures ; at the same time that it must be owned they often, by the inevitable lot of humanity, make way for the bitterest pains which the breast can experience. Happy beyond the common condition of her sex is she, who has found a Friend indeed ; open-hearted yet discreet, generously fervent yet steady, thoroughly virtuous but not severe, wise and chearful at the same time ! Can such a friend be loved too much, or cherished too tenderly ? If to excellence, as well

as happiness, there be any one way more compendious than another, next to friendship with the great Almighty, it is this.

But when a mixture of minds so beautiful and so blessed takes place, it is generally, if not always, the result of early prepossession, casual intercourse, secret sympathy, inexplicable attraction, or else a combination of such causes as are not to be brought together by management or design. This noble plant may be cultivated; but it must grow spontaneously. I can only therefore wish to each of you, beloved, the felicity of finding such a friend; and, having found her, the wisdom to use her well.

For the more general commerce of social life, a few advices may not be improper. That, like the ordinary duties of religion, may be directed with tolerable advantage by human precepts. The harmonies of holy friendship, like the sub-

limer contemplations of the Divinity, must depend more immediately on that hand, which can alone attune the finer movements, and exalt the best conceptions of the soul. Let us go on then,

In the second place, to what we may term the common tenor of your Company; which, for the sake of our subject, we must suppose left in some measure to your own choice. That it ought to be such as shall not corrupt your good manners, is a principle already established. It will be likewise understood, that, in the society you choose to frequent, you will seek for that style of virtue which is most adapted to the turn of your own minds. But this last propensity should not, I apprehend, be indulged too far. I will explain myself.

The more intimate reciprocations of a close friendship are now, as you know, out of the question. That at your time

of life you should be particularly fond of sprightly conversation, where all is enlivened and joyful, and where Wisdom when allowed to enter puts on her gayest garb, is perfectly natural. To advise you against it were as weak, as it would be unfriendly. Such sprightliness and freedom, when supported by sense, and chastened by decency, have always, I frankly acknowledge, appeared to me delightful. Dulness and insipidity, moroseness and rigour, are dead weights on every kind of social intercourse; nor will I conceal it from you that I wish, as much as any of you can do, to make my escape from them on all occasions. But tell me, my lively friends; when the heart overflows with gaiety, is there no danger of its bursting the proper bounds? Is not extreme vivacity a near borderer on folly? To prevent its breaking loose, and throwing itself into very serious inconveniencies, into a very hurtful conduct, will surely require the check of self-command. But

how is that to be attained? By associating only with the fanciful, the vivacious, or the witty? Is hazard to be shunned by rushing into the field of battle? Or, to represent things at the best, is familiarity with Wisdom to be contracted most readily, where Wisdom appears most seldom? Would ye form habits of sobriety, a spirit of sedateness, no way inconsistent with innocent mirth, you must frequently resort to the company of the sober and the sedate. But will not these be chiefly found among such as are farther advanced in years than yourselves? Should not you be ambitious of profiting by their experience and knowledge? And will not a respect for superior age, when possessed of superior discretion, often prove a reasonable restraint on the wildness of more youthful sallies? "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise," said the wisest of mortals. Is not the maxim equally applicable to women?

Will you give me leave on this occasion to mention, what is much to the honour of our sex, that all the most sensible and worthy of yours have ever professed a particular relish for the conversation of men of sense and worth? Such men, I presume, are attached to the society of such women beyond every thing else in the world. And when circumstances favour, this mutual tendency cannot fail to be a rich source of mutual improvement. Was not such reciprocal aid a great part of Nature's intention in that mental and moral difference of sex, which she has marked by characters no less distinguishable than those that diversify their outward forms?

To adopt the language of an amiable writer, who has studied the human heart with success: "We believe that it is
 "proper for persons of the same age, of
 "the same sex, of similar dispositions
 "and pursuits, to associate together. But

“ here we seem to be deceived by words.
“ If we consult nature and common
“ sense, we shall find, that the true pro-
“ priety and harmony of social life de-
“ pends upon the connexion of people of
“ different dispositions and characters ju-
“ diciously blended together. Nature
“ hath made no individual, nor no class
“ of people, independant of the rest of
“ their species, or sufficient for their own
“ happiness. Each sex, each character,
“ each period of life, have their several
“ advantages and disadvantages; and that
“ union is the happiest and most proper,
“ where wants are mutually supplied.
“ The fair sex should naturally expect
“ to gain from our conversation know-
“ ledge, wisdom, and sedateness; and
“ they should give us in exchange hu-
“ manity, politeness, cheerfulness, taste,
“ and sentiment.” He adds, “ The le-
“ vity, the rashness, and folly of early life,
“ are tempered with the gravity, the cau-
“ tion, and the wisdom of age; while

“the timidity, coldness of heart, and
 “languor incident to declining years, are
 “supported and assisted by the courage,
 “the warmth, and the vivacity of youth.”

The conversation of people older than yourselves will be often accompanied with less joy at the moment; but afterwards it will make abundant compensation. It will produce more recollection: and be assured, my sisters, those are the truest pleasures which are tasted by a mind composed and serious. In that situation, every thing is felt more strongly. A dissipated spirit is too superficial to be capable of deep or permanent delight. Besides, as has been already hinted, the experience and maturity of more years will enlarge your understandings, at the same time that they will repress your vanity and presumption; while the sportiveness peculiar to youth will, on your part, enliven the seriousness of age. And if those, whom you thus respectfully cultivate, have any

good nature, they will certainly treat you with condescension and forbearance. I said Good nature; for whatever excludes that, is sure to lose all the influence, as well as praise of wisdom.

On this principle, I would particularly recommend to you the company of those, whose piety is of the most chearful and the most charitable strain. They are strangers to human nature, who would affright the young by the frown of austerity. True religion ever was, and ever will be, of the friendly kind. It is not zeal, but bigotry, that refuses to make allowance for juvenile spirits and gayer tempers. Could the old be convinced by us, there is nothing we should be at greater pains to impress upon them than this, That as chearfulness is the most natural effect of real goodness, it is also its most powerful recommendation. Wisdom is never so attractive as when she smiles.

But do not, my dear hearers, conceive an unfavourable opinion of that venerable form, if in the virtue of your mothers and aunts you should happen to find a defect of good humour. Consider the consequences of declining health, disagreeable accidents, the death of their best friends, frequent inactivity and depression after a life of action and enjoyment. If you can look forward so far as a few years at most, it will be right for you to think what you may probably feel at their age. And pray remember, that if you require and expect allowances to be made for starts of ill humour in yourselves, at a season when all should be naturally soft and gentle, it is but fair at least that you should excuse the same in those who, not to insist now on their other claims, are objects of tender sympathy, as being invaded by languor, infirmity, and affliction.

I cannot however omit to caution them against giving way too easily to that pee-

viltness, which is apt to grow upon them from these circumstances; and to remind them, that in such as have survived the lively taste of delight themselves, there is nothing so noble or pleasing, as not to discourage others who still retain it, but on the contrary to shew a generous satisfaction in seeing and making young people happy. Ah! my respected friends, why would you ever forfeit this highest honour of an excellent temper? Why would you ever render your company forbidding, or assist in the ravage which Nature is unavoidably making on your attractions? Why rob Religion of that engaging appearance, which is not only her native appearance, but so peculiarly necessary to promote her interest with unexperienced minds, in opposition to the wiles of her laughing rival? You will hardly believe how much harm is done by this conduct to the best of causes.

The world will judge of piety by its professors. The proceeding is often un-

fair; because they are often unlike that which they profess. But there is no possibility of preventing it. The young have heard religion represented as an enemy to joy and affability. Nothing can be more unjust. Instead therefore of confirming those prejudices, it becomes you to confute them by the only argument that will thoroughly convince, the chearfulness of your discourse, and the mildness of your demeanour. In this way you may hope to do great good. When "Wisdom is thus justified of her children," they who are yet strangers to her will be induced to venerate an authority that appears so condescending, and to study precepts that are productive of such happiness. But to return to my young hearers, allow me,

In the third place, to offer you a few hints on the spirit and manner, in which I conceive your Conversation should be conducted. And now perhaps you imagine

we want to preclude every degree of that which passes under the name of Trifling. You are mistaken. We do not expect that women should always utter grave sentences, nor men neither. It were inconsistent with the state of mankind. It cannot be expected from philosophers of the first rank; nor if it could, do I know that it would be desirable. I am even inclined to believe, that they who understand the art of what has been termed Trifling agreeably, have gained a very considerable point. The frailty of human nature, and the infelicity of human life, require to be relieved and soothed. There are many occasions, on which this is not to be done by sage admonitions, or solemn reflexions. These, to well disposed minds, are often highly solacing; but to dwell on them always were to strain the machine beyond its powers. Besides, in fact, a seasonable diversion to anxiety, a temporary forgetfulness of grief, is frequently a far better method to remove it, than any

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direct application or laboured remedy. To change the metaphor; when the road proves rugged, or is in danger of growing tedious, one successful method of beguiling it is for the travellers to cheer and amuse one another by the play of fancy, and the facetiousness of mirth. But then the end of the journey must not be forgotten. Because we are weak, there is no reason why we should be silly. The brow of care may surely be smoothed without converting it into the laugh of folly. While we indulge the recreation necessary for mortal, let us maintain the temper requisite in immortal beings. To reconcile these two things, and to blend them happily, seems the proper science of creatures on their progress through time to eternity. From you, my gentle friends, we look for every thing that, next to the diviner influence of religion, can soften the inequality, and animate the dulness of the way.

We wish to see you often smile; but we would not have you smile always, if it were possible. There are many scenes that demand a grave deportment; there are not few that call for a mournful one. She that cannot distinguish between laughter and happiness, never knew what the latter means. She that cannot “weep with them that weep,” as well as “rejoice with them that rejoice,” is a stranger to one of the sweetest sources of enjoyment, no less than to one of the noblest lessons of Christianity. Those are the happiest dispositions, which are the best. Benevolence is the supreme perfection of the ever-blessed Deity. He is infinitely removed from every painful impression. Yet scripture, in the style of accommodation, ascribes to him all the guiltless emotions of humanity: and we know that our Saviour was formerly on earth, and is now in heaven, “touch-
“ed with the feeling of our infirmities.”

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With the character of a Christian Woman nothing, methinks, can better correspond than a propensity to melt into affectionate sorrow. It becomes alike her religion and her sex. Never, my fair auditory, never do your eyes shine with a more delightful effulgence, than when suffused with all the trembling softness of grief for virtue in distress, or of solicitude for friendship in danger. Believe me, if the gaiety of conversation gave place somewhat oftener to the tender tale of woe, you would not, to such at least of your male acquaintance as have hearts, appear at all the less lovely. The sigh of compassion stealing from a female breast, on the mention of calamity, would be rather more musical in their ears, than the loud bursts of unmeaning laughter, with which they are often entertained. Let me add here, that the charms of innocence and sympathy appearing in your discourse will, to every discerning man, spread

around you a lustre which all the jewels
in the world cannot bestow.

The diamond's and the ruby's blaze
Disputes the palm with beauty's queen:
Not beauty's queen commands such praise,
Devoid of virtue if she's seen.

But the soft tear in Pity's eye
Outshines the diamond's brightest beams;
But the sweet blush of Modesty
More beauteous than the ruby seems.

If we speak of improvement; merciful Redeemer, how edifying to the soul is this generous sensibility! "It is better
"to go to the house of mourning than
"to the house of feasting: for that is
"the end of all men, and the living will
"lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than
"laughter: for by the sadness of the
"countenance the heart is made better.
"The heart of the wise is in the house
"of mourning; but the heart of fools is
"in the house of mirth. As the crackling

“ of thorns under a pot, so is the laugh-
 “ ter of a fool. This also is vanity.”
 You know who said so—The man who
 had spent many a day, and many a night,
 in the bower of voluptuousness, far from
 the cries of misery, and the moans of
 complaint ; who gat him “ men-fingers
 “ and women-fingers, and the delights
 “ of the sons of men ;” who had, times
 without number, said in his heart, “ Go
 “ to now, I will prove thee with mirth,
 “ therefore enjoy pleasure ;” who sought
 by a prudent use of wine to exalt his own
 spirits, and to promote the hilarity of
 those about him ; in a word, who kept
 not from his eyes whatsoever they desired,
 nor with-held his heart from any joy.
 This, I say, was the man whom expe-
 rience, as well as inspiration prompted to
 give the preference you have just now
 heard. There is—yes, there is attendant
 on virtuous sadness a sensation which, in
 point of indulgence and elevation at once,
 is superior to all that was ever felt by a

light mind, in the flush of festivity, or amidst the triumph of wit.

Having mentioned Wit, let me proceed to warn you against the affectation and the abuse of it. Here our text from the Colossians comes in with propriety, "Let your Speech be always with Grace, seasoned with Salt." These remarkable words were addressed to christians in general. They are considered by the best commentators, as an exhortation to that kind of converse, which, both for matter and manner, shall appear most graceful, and prove most acceptable; being tempered by courteousness and modesty, seasoned with wisdom and discretion, that like salt will serve, at the same instant, to prevent its corruption and heighten its flavour. How beautiful this precept in itself! How useful and pleasing in the practice! How peculiarly fit to be practised by you, my female friends, on the turn of whose conversation and deportment so

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much depends to yourselves, and all about you ! From what I have now to offer, it will be found likewise to come, with advantage, in aid of our leading doctrine; since there are not perhaps many worse foes to that Sobriety of spirit, which we would still inculcate, than the abuse and affectation already mentioned.

It is not my design to gather up, if I could, the profusion of flowers that have been scattered by innumerable hands on this tempting theme; and by which those very hands have, in their own case, shewn how difficult it is to resist the temptation. I would only observe, that the dangerous talent in question has been well compared to the dancing of a meteor, that blazes, allures, and misleads. Most certainly it alone can never be a steady light; and too probably it is often a fatal one. Of those who have resigned themselves to its guidance, how few has it not betrayed into great indiscretions at least,

by inflaming their thirst of applause ; by rendering them little nice in their choice of company ; by seducing them into strokes of satire, too offensive to the persons against whom they were levelled, not to be repelled upon the authors with full vengeance ; and finally, by making them, in consequence of that heat which produces, and that vanity which fosters it, forgetful of those cool and moderate rules that ought to regulate their conduct !

A very few there may have been, endowed with judgment and temper sufficient to restrain them from indulging “ the rash dexterity of wit,” and to direct it to purposes equally agreeable and beneficial. But one thing is certain, that witty men for the most part have had few friends, though many admirers. Their conversation has been courted, while their abilities have been feared, or their characters hated, or both. In truth the last have seldom merited affection,

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even when the first have excited esteem. Sometimes their hearts have been so bad, as at length to bring their heads into disgrace. At any rate, the faculty termed Wit is commonly looked upon with a suspicious eye, as a two-edged sword, from which not even the sacredness of friendship can secure. It is especially, I think, dreaded in women. In a Mrs. Rowe, I dare say, it was not. To great brilliancy of imagination that female angel joined yet greater goodness of disposition; and never wrote, nor, as I have been told, was ever supposed to have said, in her whole life, an ill-natured, or even an indelicate thing. Of such a woman, with all her talents, none could be afraid. In her company, it must have been impossible not to feel respect; but then it would be like that, which the pious man entertains for a ministring spirit from heaven, a respect full of confidence and joy. If aught on earth can present the image of celestial excellence in its softest

array, it is surely an Accomplished Woman, in whom purity and meekness, intelligence and modesty, mingle their charms. But when I speak on this subject, need I tell you, that men of the best sense have been usually averse to the thought of marrying a witty female ?

You will probably tell me, they were afraid of being outshone ; and some of them perhaps might be so. But I am apt to believe, that many of them acted on different motives. Men who understand the science of domestic happiness, know that its very first principle is ease. Of that indeed we grow fonder, in whatever condition, as we advance in life, and as the heat of youth abates. But we cannot be easy, where we are not safe. We are never safe in the company of a critic ; and almost every wit is a critic by profession. In such company we are not at liberty to unbend ourselves. All must be the straining of study, or the anxiety of ap-

prehesion: how painful! Where the heart may not expand and open itself with freedom, farewell to real friendship, farewell to convivial delight! But to suffer this restraint at home, what misery! From the brandishings of wit in the hand of ill-nature, of imperious passion, or of unbounded vanity, who would not flee? But when that weapon is pointed at a husband, is it to be wondered if from his own house he takes shelter in the tavern? He sought a soft friend; he expected to be happy in a reasonable companion. He has found a perpetual satirist, or a self-sufficient prattler. How have I pitied such a man, when I have seen him in continual fear on his own account, and that of his friends, and for the poor lady herself; lest, in the run of her discourse, she should be guilty of some petulance, or some indiscretion, that would expose her and hurt them all! But take the matter at the best; there is still all the difference in the world

between the entertainer of an evening, and a partner for life. Of the latter a sober mind, steady attachment, and gentle manners, joined to a good understanding, will ever be the chief recommendations; whereas the qualities that sparkle will be often sufficient for the former.

As to the affectation of wit, one can hardly say, whether it be most ridiculous or hurtful. The abuse of it, which we have been just considering, we are sometimes, perhaps too often, inclined to forgive, for the sake of that amusement which in spite of all the improprieties mentioned it yet affords. The other is universally contemptible and odious. Who is not shocked by the flippant impertinence of a self-conceited woman, that wants to dazzle by the supposed superiority of her powers? If you, my fair ones, have knowledge and capacity; let it be seen, by your not affecting to show them, that

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you have something much more valuable,
humility and wisdom.

- “ Naked in nothing should a woman be,
“ But veil her very wit with modesty.
“ Let man discover, let not her display,
“ But yield her charms of mind with sweet
“ delay.”

Must women then keep silence in the
house, as well as in the church? By no
means. There may indeed be many cases,
in which it will particularly become a
young lady to observe the apostolic rule,
“ Be swift to hear, and slow to speak :”
but there are many too, wherein it will
be no less fit, that with an unassuming air
she should endeavour to support and enli-
ven the conversation. It is the opinion
of some, that girls should never speak be-
fore company, when their parents are pre-
sent; and parents there are, so deficient in
understanding, as to make this a rule.

How then shall those girls learn to acquit themselves properly in their absence? It is hard if you cannot distinguish, and teach your daughters to distinguish, between good breeding and pertness, between an obliging study to please and an indecent desire to put themselves forward, between a laudable inquisitiveness and an improper curiosity. But this, I confess, is not the most common mistake in the education of young women; and they must permit me to say, that it were well if the generality of mothers were careful, by prudent instruction in private, to repress that talkative humour which runs away with so many of them, and never quits them all their life after, for want of being curbed in their early years. But what words can express the impertinence of a female tongue let loose into boundless loquacity? Nothing can be more stunning, except where a number of Fine Ladies open at once—Protect us, ye powers of gentleness and decorum, pro-

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fect us from the disgust of such a scene——

Ah! my dear hearers, if ye knew how terrible it appears to a male ear of the least delicacy, I think you would take care never to practise it.

For endless prattling, and loud discourse, no degree of capacity can atone. I join them together, because in effect they are seldom separate. But the noisy, empty, trivial chatter of everlasting folly—it is too much for human patience to sustain. How different from that playful spirit in conversation, spoken of before; which, blended with good sense and kept within reasonable bounds, contributes, like the lighter and more careless touches in a picture, to give an air of ease and freedom to the whole! This freedom and ease, when accompanied with decency and variety, a certain native prettiness and unstudied correctness, are among the most pleasing characteristics of female society in its best shape.

Your talking so much about dress, and fashions, and fashionable amusements, as the far greater part of you are ever doing, in preference to better subjects, is, to say the softest thing of it, a weakness which cannot be justified, but which perhaps must, in some measure, be forgiven to your sex. As to the love of scandal and dispute, which may be called the Acid of speech, in contradistinction to the Salt recommended by our apostle, it must be reserved for a future consideration. The men, indeed, are ready to triumph at the very mention of it. Whether they have reason to triumph on the whole, may be a difficult question. The agreeable qualities named a moment ago, they must fairly give up to the women. How few of them in comparison possess, or at least exercise, the power of keeping discourse alive, without assistance from wine, from politics, from business, from the news of the day, and from another theme, for which their unrestrained and inextinguishable passion, in male company, argues a

descent of soul, a degradation of thought, whereof men endowed with the least understanding ought to be ashamed !

I just mentioned Unstudied Correctness as appropriated to the conversation of cultivated women. I mean that easy elegance of speech, which results from clear and lively ideas, expressed with the simplicity of nature, somewhat aided by the knowledge of books. To this the best scholars amongst the men must seldom or never lay claim. It is necessarily precluded by their profounder studies, and that scrupulous attention to the minutest rules of grammar, which is induced by the turn of their education ; and which, though by practice it may become in a great degree habitual and mechanical, will yet always appear deficient in the happy facility, wherewith so many females clothe their sentiments. That they, who are naturally fond of ornament in every thing else, should show a certain honest neglect of it, where it is least requisite, where it is gene-

rally hurtful by embarrassing and fettering that which ought to be free and unaffected, surely entitles them to some praise.

How often have we seen very ingenious men perplexed, when they have wished to explain themselves on some topic by no means abstruse, and which they perfectly understood ! With how little grace have we heard them tell a story ! In these, and such like points, women of any capacity excel. To what can the difference be owing ? I fancy to this, that the former, in their words and ideas, attend too sedulously to precision and embellishment ; while the latter are content to speak just what they mean, and to relate simply what they have read or heard, as it rises to their minds, without the labour of accuracy, which often hampers the faculties in their operation, and disturbs the train of nature.

On this principle, I presume, is founded that maxim, which makes the perfec-

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tion of art to lie in concealing it; an attainment extremely uncommon, and which, where it has taken place, has been always considered as the most difficult, and the most beautiful, of any that can distinguish the productions of taste. From this it is, that the celebrated works of ancient genius have been judged to derive a large share of the superiority usually ascribed to them. From the same source chiefly, to compare small things with great, has probably arisen that peculiar happiness in letter-writing, which the men, I think, are willing to allow to your sex. Here, indeed, they comfort themselves with their superior strength, and depth, and learned elegance in that, and other matters where intellect is concerned. Pretensions to these, with a few exceptions, I believe, to say the truth, you had better resign.

For my part, I could heartily wish to see the female world more accomplished than it is; but I do not wish to see it

abound with metaphysicians, historians, speculative philosophers, or Learned Ladies of any kind. I should be afraid, lest the sex should lose in softness what they gained in force; and lest the pursuit of such elevation should interfere a little with the plain duties and humble virtues of life. Amiable instances of the contrary I know there are. I think at this moment of one lady, in particular, who to an extensive knowledge in philosophy and languages ancient and modern, with some portion of poetical genius, and a considerable degree of literary fame, has the sense and worth to join every domestic quality that can adorn a woman in her situation.

To inculcate such qualities, together with those elegant and intellectual improvements which young ladies would do well to acquire, with a view to sobriety, usefulness, self-enjoyment, and the powers of pleasing, will be the business of some subsequent addresses. What place religion

ought to have in female discourse, must be likewise a subject of enquiry under another head. In the mean while, let me intreat you to recollect, that on cultivating a proper spirit of conversation will depend a great part of your proficiency and ours; of your present acceptance amongst the wise and deserving; of your future consequence and merit in society; of your entertainment, satisfaction, and, I may add, safety, through the successive stages of life. Much of that life is spent in scenes of social intercourse. Important occasions arise but seldom. A large proportion must be consigned to trifles. Little things belong to little mortals. The virtue and happiness of the sexes are principally affected by the daily indiscriminate tenor of their commerce. What felicity, and what glory, may not you, my friends, derive from those talents by which that is regulated and sweetened, refined and raised!

S E R M O N VI.

O N

FEMALE VIRTUE,

W I T H

DOMESTIC AND ELEGANT
ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

J. B. R. M. O. N. W.

FEMALE VESTIBL

WITH

DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN

ACCOUNTS

S E R M O N VI.

On Female Virtue, with Domestic and
Elegant Accomplishments.

1. TIM. ii. 8, 9.

*I will—that women adorn^r themselves with
Sobriety.*

PROV. xxxi. 10, 31.

*Who can find a Virtuous Woman? For her
price is far above rubies.—Give her of
the fruit of her hands, and let her Works
praise her in the gates.*

TO divert fancy, to gratify desire,
and in general to be a sort of better
servants, are all the purposes for which
some suppose your sex designed. A most
illiberal supposition! The least degree of
refinement or candour will dispose us to

regard them in a far higher point of light. They were manifestly intended to be the mothers and formers of a rational and immortal offspring; to be a kind of softer companions, who, by nameless delightful sympathies and endearments, might improve our pleasures and soothe our pains; to lighten the load of domestic cares, and thereby leave us more at leisure for rougher labours, or severer studies; and finally, to spread a certain grace and embellishment over human life. To wish to degrade them from so honourable a station, indicates a mixture of ignorance, grossness, and barbarity. But the men who think in this manner, do themselves irreparable wrong, by putting it out of their power ever to enjoy the tenderest sentiments and most delicious feelings of the heart. He that has a true taste of happiness will choose, for his own sake, to cherish the kindest opinion of the female destination.

Yet what shall we say ? Are there not many women who seem to have entirely forgotten it themselves ; to have relinquished at least the most valuable part of their claim, and to have conspired with those male tyrants in sinking their own importance ? How often do we see them disfigured by affectation and caprice ! How often disgraced and ruined by imprudence ! What shameful inattention to the culture of their minds, in numberless instances ! What perversion, in not a few, of excellent understandings, through a levity that passes for innocent, because not polluted by vice, nay for agreeable, because accompanied with youth ! Who that is a well-wisher to the sex, can forbear to be mortified on finding such multitudes so ungainly in their manners, so unentertaining in their discourse, so destitute of every solid and useful improvement, in a word, so totally devoid of all that can confer significance, or beget esteem ; not to speak of down-

right worthlessness, proceeding from bad principles or wicked company ?

With respect to these indeed, as well as the rest, I am willing to believe, that they are frequently occasioned by vacancy of thought, and want of occupation, which expose the mind to every snare; and that, in many cases, all this evil might, through God's blessing, be happily prevented by an early and diligent application to Female Accomplishments. Such therefore I will proceed to recommend, as a farther means of maintaining the Sobriety enjoined by our apostle. Not that I propose to confine myself to this single view. Every other laudable and beneficial purpose, which those accomplishments are calculated to serve, will concur to enforce them. They may be divided into three classes, Domestic, Elegant, and Intellectual.

As to the first, I must remind you that, how much soever they may be now ne-

glected by many women as below their notice, no height of rank or affluence can justify such neglect. The care of a household all ages and nations have agreed to consider as an indispensable part of female employment, in every situation that admits it. The passage from which I have taken one of my texts deserves, on this occasion, your particular attention. As it exhibits perhaps the most beautiful picture that was ever drawn of the *Virtuous Woman*, in a sphere of activity which you all hope to fill, and for which you ought to qualify yourselves as much as possible in your present condition; I will read the whole, together with a short paraphrase which I have borrowed chiefly from the pious and learned bishop Patrick, but without adhering to his diction.

Verse 10. "Who can find a *Virtuous Woman*? for her price is far above "rubies." Such a person, says the mo-

ther of Lemuel (a young prince for whose welfare she was most tenderly solicitous) such a person as I would recommend for a wife is hard to be found; one endowed with true worth and piety, who deems nothing beneath her that can any way become her station; one, in short, possessed of those various and excellent qualities that fit her for adorning it, and render her infinitely more valuable than all the pearls or precious stones, with which so many women are fond of being decked.

II. “The heart of her husband doth
“safely trust in her; so that he shall have
“no need of spoil.” In her personal honour and fidelity, and also in her œconomy and prudence with regard to all affairs at home, her husband reposes such perfect confidence, that he can go abroad, and attend to public business, without the smallest anxiety about his domestic concerns, or the least temptation to enrich himself at the expence of other men.

12. “She will do him good, and not “evil, all the days of her life.” She will not only return his love with equal affection, but endeavour to ensure and heighten his esteem by every engaging and respectable virtue. She will not only avoid whatever might provoke or displease, but study to deserve well of him by promoting his interest, and raising his reputation; and that not merely by starts, or in transient fits of good humour, but uniformly and constantly every day of her life.

13. “She seeketh wool and flax, and “worketh willingly with her hands.” To Her idleness is so hateful, that her husband has no occasion to excite her to industry. Of her own accord she sets up a linen and woollen manufacture, to which she applies her hands so readily, as well as so dextrously, that it is apparent she delights in the work.

14. “She is like the merchants ships : “she bringeth her food from afar.” Her

application and ingenuity enable her to maintain her family without expence, by exchanging the product for foreign commodities, when necessary, on terms no less advantageous than if her husband fitted out a fleet of merchant ships to fetch them directly from distant countries.

15. “She riseth also while it is yet
“night; and giveth meat to her household,
“and a portion to her maidens.” With
such spirit and vigour does she proceed,
that, instead of indulging herself in over
much sleep, she rises before break of day,
to make provision for those who are to go
abroad to work in the fields, and to set
her maidens their several tasks at home.

16. “She considereth a field, and
“buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands
“she planteth a vineyard.” So far is she
from wasting her husband’s estate, that by
her frugality and capacity she is continu-
ally improving it; first purchasing a field

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fit for corn, when she meets with one that on due inspection she finds worth the price, and then from the fruit of her own labours adding to it a vineyard, which she takes care to have well planted.

17. “ She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.” As she is quick in her orders to those about her, so she bestirs herself with the utmost activity, declining no pains or exertion proportioned to her strength, which is increased by constant exercise, and which, with the chearfulness, expedition, and utility that attend it, she prefers to all the decorations and delicacy of indolent beauty.

18. “ She perceiveth that her merchandise is good : her candle goeth not out by night.” Her labour indeed she finds so wholesome, and her traffick so profitable, that she does not always conclude her work with the day ; but often

continues it through as much of the night, as can be spared from necessary repose.

19. "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff." Such manual operations as are suited to her sex, she reckons not any disparagement to her quality. Her fingers show a dexterity that is alike pleasing in the performance, and beneficial in the effects.

20. "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor: yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." Those hands, which she employs with so much diligence for the advantage of her family, she fails not to stretch out with equal alacrity for the relief of the indigent. She is not so engrossed by the cares of her own household, as to forget the claims of those who have no habitation. In Her frugality never degenerates into parsimony, but always ministers to munificence. The poor, whe-

ther nearer or more remote, share liberally in her bounty.

21. “ She is not afraid of the snow for
“ her household : for all her household are
“ clothed with scarlet.” Her bounty in
the mean while is accompanied with such
discretion, that her own family and ser-
vants are in no danger of suffering by it.
They are provided against the hardest
winter ; they have changes of raiment for
the several seasons ; and when they are to
wait upon her, or to appear on any parti-
cular occasion that requires it, she is care-
ful to have them clothed with a degree of
splendor.

22. “ She maketh herself coverings of
“ tapestry : her clothing is silk and pur-
“ ple.” The furniture of her house is
noble. Her own apparel corresponds with
it. She is not ignorant of what belongs
to her rank ; and she supports it with a
magnificence so much the more conspi-

cuous for being principally her own handiwork.

23. “ Her husband is known in the
“ gates, when he sitteth among the elders
“ of the land.” Her attention to the appearance of her husband is not less than to her own. When he comes into the courts of judicature, and takes his place amongst the senators of the country, he is distinguished by the richness and elegance of the robes which she has prepared for him. The beholders pronounce him a happy man, in having such a wife as does him honour in public as well as private, and who, by easing him of all lesser cares, leaves him at full liberty to devote himself to the most important transactions.

24. “ She maketh fine linen, and selleth it, and delivereth girdles unto the
“ merchant.” Her industry to provide for her family is such, that she follows more arts than one or two; making,

for example, beside other articles already named, fine linen, embroidered belts, and girdles of different kinds curiously wrought, which she sells at a considerable price to the Phenician merchant.

25. “Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.” Although in every thing she makes, whether for sale or for use, she displays a just taste of what is both beautiful and splendid, still it must be remembered, that her chief ornaments are a firm and constant mind, a modest and becoming deportment, a manner of dealing with all, that is honourable, uniform, and generous; which, joined to her other qualities before mentioned, free her from all fear about future events, and prepare her to meet affliction, decay, and even death itself, with serenity and hope.

26. “She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” Add to the rest this par-

ticular praise, that as she preserves the due mean between taciturnity and loquaciousness, so she loves not to talk on foolish and frivolous subjects, but on such as are serious and useful; on which, when she can introduce them with propriety, she is sure to deliver herself pertinently and gracefully. Her language on all occasions is soft and pleasing, expressive of a gentle mind, and a tender heart. From the same fund, she is led to embrace every opportunity of inculcating on all around her, kind affections and mutual concord.

27. “She looketh well to the ways
“of her household, and eateth not the
“bread of idleness.” In her own house
most especially she is studious of conveying edification. She observes the motions, and inspects the manners of every one there, whom she neither suffers to go abroad at their pleasure, nor to labour at home without proper instruction: a con-

cern, which might alone be thought sufficient to employ her; infomuch that if she did nothing else she would yet deserve the bread she eats.

28. “ Her children arise up, and call “ her blessed : her husband also, and he “ praiseth her.” Happy the children of such a mother, whose maternal care for their provision, but much more for their education, cannot fail of exciting their love and gratitude very early, and of disposing them, when grown up, to honour her person and venerate her virtues ! Happy beyond expression the husband of such a wife ! He can never commend her sufficiently. While he attempts the favourite subject, he is so struck with her surpassing worth, that he cannot restrain himself from crying out,

29. “ Many daughters have done virtuously ; but thou excellest them all.” The number of those women who have

acted worthily, who have mightily advanced their families, and nobly served the generations in which they lived, is not small. They are well entitled to applause, and I give it them with pleasure; but there was never any comparable to Thee. Thy merits, thou best of women, and most beloved, thy merits far, far transcend them all!

30. "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." A good complexion and fine shape are, no doubt, engaging. A graceful mien and lovely features are yet more so. But as the greatest beauty soon fades, and at last vanishes, so, alas! many ill qualities may lie concealed under all these fair appearances; such, indeed, as utterly to disappoint every hope of happiness from that quarter. A truly pious woman, one who is governed throughout by a sense of duty, and who to all her other excellent qualities

adds that reverence for God, which gives them at once elevation and stability—she, and she alone, is the completely amiable object, who will always impart delight, and always deserve approbation.

31. “Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.” Let all conspire to extol her character; for I cannot do it enough. Let her never want her just tribute of commendation. While some are magnified for their high birth, some prized for their great fortune, others admired for their singular beauty, and others cried up for attainments of no intrinsic, or of no considerable value; let her personal conduct, and her superior qualities, be celebrated with peculiar honours in the largest assemblies; where, indeed, if all men should be silent, that conduct and those qualities would resound her praise.

What a description is here! Can you attend to it without emotion? Or have

modern manners so warped your minds, that the simplicity of ancient virtue, instead of appearing to you an object of veneration, looks romantic and ridiculous? Tell me then in good earnest, were the women of those days the less estimable, or the less attractive, that they did not waste their lives in a round of dissipation and impertinence, but employed them in works of ingenuity and usefulness, of piety and mercy; that even women of the first rank amongst them, as we are informed by the oldest and best authors, held it no diminution to apply their hands to different kinds of manufacture; that they took great delight in such occupations; and finally, that good housewifery, in all its extent, was reckoned an essential qualification of every matron?

I am sufficiently sensible of the influence that the customs of different ages and nations have on the modes of thinking that successively obtain; nor do I expect, that in this land called Christian, which ought

to be unequalled on account of its attainments, as much as it is on that of its advantages, our mothers or our daughters, in general, will be persuaded by any thing preachers can say, to emulate the humble grandeur of many a noble lady, of many a fair princess, in former generations. Yet I am not without hope, that some of them may be induced to copy, though at a distance, those modest but exalted originals.

I mentioned our daughters, as well as mothers ; because I would not have them think that they have nothing to learn from the picture we have just surveyed. Would the *Virtuous Woman*, so sweetly portrayed by Lemuel's mother, and so particularly marked by the characters of married and maternal excellence, have been what she was, if in her single state she had not studied the necessary principles ?

After looking at so sublime a standard, I am well aware, that any thing I can

now offer on this part of my subject will appear to sink. I am sorry for it. But since it must be so, let the mortifying sentiment be felt by all, as a just satire on the declension of this age. To say the truth, the zeal of the preacher is too much depressed by that consideration, to bear him out in urging our young women to a close imitation of what however he must always admire. In short, when we speak of good housewifery now a days, we must submit to speak in a lower key. Would to heaven, that of this science many mothers would teach their daughters but the common rudiments; that they were unfashionable enough to educate them to be fit for any thing beyond mere show!

What do not great families suffer daily from the incapacity, or inattention, of those mistresses that leave all to housekeepers and other servants! How many large estates might be saved from ruin by a wiser conduct! I must say it once more,

that no woman in the world ought to think it beneath her to be an œconomist. An œconomist is a character truly respectable, in whatever station. To see that time which should be laid out in examining the accounts, regulating the operations, and watching over the interests of perhaps a numerous family—to see it lost, worse than lost, in visiting and gaming, “in chambering and wantonness,” is shocking. It is so, let the incomes be as certain, as considerable, or as immense as you will; though by the way they are hardly ever so immense in reality, as they often appear. But where, on the contrary, they are both moderate and precarious, a conduct of this kind we have no words to stigmatize as it deserves.

Merchants and tradesmen that marry such women are surely objects of singular compassion, if indeed they were deceived into an opinion, that the women they have chosen for their partners were taught

this necessary piece of knowledge. But very seldom, as matters are managed at present, have they such deception to plead for their choice. Is it possible they can be ignorant in what manner young ladies are bred at most of our Boarding-schools? And do they not see in what manner they generally behave on coming home? Some of them, I acknowledged before, when placed in houses of their own, appear to much more advantage than could be reasonably expected. But I repeat the question I then asked, Is so great a chance, in an affair of such consequence, to be relied upon?

It must be owned also, that in this age the order or figure of a table is pretty well understood, as far as relates to splendor and parade. But would it not be worth your while to improve upon the art, by learning to connect frugality with elegance; to produce a genteel, or however a good appearance, from things of less

expence? I know it is difficult, especially in great cities; but I am sure it is laudable, and deserves to be attempted. This you may depend upon, that most men are highly pleased to observe such œconomical talents in a young woman; and those talents in one that is married will scarce ever fail to animate the application, excite the generosity, and heighten the confidence of a husband. The contrary discourages and disgusts beyond expression; I mean, where the husband has any sobriety, or any prudence. The follies inseparable from profusion, and the miseries daily produced by it, I do not pretend to enumerate. A moment's consideration will convince you, that it is always unwise, and must be generally destructive.

Next to direct profusion is that indisposition to family affairs, which too commonly follows on habits of dissipation contracted early. A young woman who has turned

her thoughts to those matters in her father's house, or in any other where Providence may have disposed her lot, and who has been accustomed to acquit herself well in any lesser department entrusted to her care, will afterwards, when her province is enlarged, slide into the duties of it with readiness and pleasure. The particulars have already passed through her mind. The different scenes, as they rise, will not disconcert her. Being acquainted with the leading rules, and having had some opportunities of applying them, or of seeing them applied, her own good sense will dictate the rest, and render easy and agreeable to her that which, to a modish lady, is all strange, perplexing, and irksome. How strong the contrast! Who does not perceive, where the preference is due?

Hear what a masterly writer, who seems to have been well acquainted with the world, and particularly with the commer-

cial part of it, has advanced on this head in his advice to a son, where he is directing him as to the choice of a wife. "This bear always in mind, that if she is not frugal, if she is not what is called a Good Manager, if she does not pique herself on her knowledge of family affairs, and laying out her money to the best advantage; let her be ever so sweetly tempered, gracefully made, or elegantly accomplished, she is no wife for a tradesman: and," he even adds, "all those otherwise amiable talents will but open just so many ways to ruin." After relating a little story, full of instruction, he thus goes on: "In short, remember your mother, who was so exquisitely versed in this art, that her dress, her table, and every other particular, appeared rather splendid than otherwise; and yet good housewifery was the foundation of all; and her bills, to my certain knowledge, were a fourth less than most of her neigh-

“ bours, who had hardly cleanliness to
“ boast, in return for their aukward pro-
“ digality.”

But perhaps you will tell me, that you may never have occasion to exert such qualities in any sphere of consequence. The answer is obvious. As the future is uncertain, you ought to acquire them in case of need ; besides, in fact, there is no situation, where the general principles of frugality are not necessary, on the score both of discretion and charity. In the mean while, the acquisition will be honourable, and the study useful. It not only becomes your sex, but will employ your minds innocently, and virtuously, at hours which you might be tempted to spend in a very different manner. The subject is not intricate ; yet it admits of a considerable detail, and will take up some time. The learning to write a fair hand, and to cast accounts with facility ; the looking into the dispositions and practices

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of servants; the informing yourselves about the prices of every thing needful for a family, together with the best methods, and properest seasons, for providing it; the observing whatever relates to cleanliness and neatness in the furniture and apartments of a house; the understanding how to deal with domestics, tradesmen, and others; above all, the obtaining every possible light with relation to the nursing, management, and education of children—these and such like articles will, if I mistake not, furnish ample scope for the exercise of your faculties, in the pursuit of what I have termed Domestic Accomplishments. Nor would I have you despise any one of them as trivial or dull. If they should seem either, you must give me leave to say the fault is in you. If on any pretence whatever you should affect to call them so, I should deem it a mark of——But I forbear; and, for your encouragement to such application, would take notice, that from what

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is thus necessary and beneficial, you may, time after time, pass, with a transition often imperceptible, to what is also pretty and entertaining. Which leads me to speak,

In the second place, of the Elegant Accomplishments I proposed to recommend. Of these all will be found consistent with Christian Sobriety, and several conducive to it. Where morals are not in some measure concerned, the peculiar modes of an age can occasion no material difference. Some particulars, I am now to touch upon, might not suit that unsettled and persecuted state which the first professors of christianity were in, nor that distinguished severity of manners which would naturally arise out of such a condition, as well as out of their late separation from paganism; and yet those things may be no way improper in a christian woman of these times, when religion is established, when property is secured, and

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when the prevalence of a system supremely benevolent has nothing to fear from a jealous policy, or a bigoted priesthood.

To begin with that exercise which women appear almost universally fond of, but which scrupulous minds have usually thought exceptionable. For my own part, I must acknowledge, I can see no reason for declamation against the moderate and discreet use of Dancing. “To every thing,” says Solomon, “there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven :”—among the rest—“a time to dance.” Even those pursuits which all approve, and approve most highly, may be abused. Nothing is exempt from snares : but one of the worst is a disposition to be peevish, illiberal, and unsociable. In the Jewish institution, it is well known, the exercise in question was adopted into religious worship itself. It is yet more remarkable, that in the parable of the prodigal son our Saviour

mentions dancing, as making a part of the friendly and honest festivity indulged on his return. The single instance recorded in the New Testament, wherein it was perverted to a pernicious purpose, has been weakly urged against a practice that, used with temperance and prudence, is certainly adapted to promote health and good humour, a social spirit, and kind affections between the sexes, with that easy graceful carriage, to which Nature has annexed very pleasing perceptions in the beholders.

With respect to this last, it seems to me, that there can be no impropriety in it, any more than in modulating the voice into the most agreeable tones in singing; to which none, I think, will object. What is dancing, in the best sense, but the harmony of motion rendered more palpable? Awkwardness, rusticity, ungraceful gestures, can never surely be meritorious. It is the observation of a cele-

brated philosopher, who was deeply skilled on most subjects, that “ the principal part of beauty is in decent and gracious motion.” And here one cannot help regretting that this, which may be considered in some measure as the virtue of the body, is not oftener seen in our country, as if the sole design of dancing were to supply the amusement of the hour. A modest but animated mien, an air at once unaffected and noble, are doubtless circumstances of great attraction and delight.

I said a Modest mien ; for that must never be given up : And on this account, I own, I cannot much approve of a young lady’s dancing often in public assemblies, which, without a singular guard, must gradually wear off that lovely bashfulness so largely inculcated in a former discourse. Private circles consisting chiefly of friends and relations, and where persons of more years than the younger performers are present, I should esteem in every respect the

most eligible. Where such precautions are observed, and this diversion is not suffered to interfere with health, regularity, modest apparel, and prudent expence; I freely confess, that I am one of those who can look on with a very sensible satisfaction, well pleased to see a company of young people joyful with innocence, and happy in each other. If an exercise so sociable, and so enlivening, were to occupy some part of that time which is lavished on cards, would the youth of either sex be losers by it? I think not.

Having mentioned Cards, I will use the freedom, unpleasing as it may prove, or ill bred as it may seem, to offer a few plain remarks on the passion for them, which is now become so strangely predominant, as to take the lead of every thing else in almost every company of every rank. With many indeed it seems to be a calling, and, as a witty author has observed, “ a laborious one too, such as

“ they toil night and day at, nay do not
“ allow themselves that remission which
“ the laws both of God and man have
“ provided for the meanest mechanic.
“ The sabbath is to them no day of rest ;
“ but this trade goes on when all shops
“ are shut. I know not,” continues he,
“ how they satisfy themselves in such an
“ habitual waste of their time ; but I
“ much doubt that plea, whatsoever it is,
“ which passeth with them, will scarce
“ hold weight at his tribunal who hath
“ commanded us to redeem, not fling
“ away our time.”

To the same occupation what numbers sacrifice their health and spirits, with every natural pleasure that depends on these, not excepting even the comforts of fresh air ; pursuing it in the country with the same unabating ardour as in town, and to all the beauty and sweetness of rural scenes, in the finest season, preferring the suffocating atmosphere of perhaps a

small apartment, where they regularly, every day if possible, crowd round the card-table for hours together ! What neglect of business and study, what ruin of credit, of fortune, of families, of connexions, of all that is valuable in this world, often follows the frenzy I speak of, who can express ?

I will suppose, my fair hearers, nay I do hope, that the demon of Avarice has not yet taken possession of your hearts. But do ye know any thing so likely to introduce him, as the spirit of Gaming ? Is not this last a kindred fiend ; and does not he, like most other tempters, advance by slow steps, and with a smiling aspect ? Tell me in sober sadness, what security can you have that the love of play will not lead you to the love of gaming ?

Between these I know there is a distinction. But is it not a distinction, at best, resembling that between twilight and

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darkness; and does not one succeed the other almost as naturally? The former at first is chearful and serene, retaining some rays of pleasantry and good humour; but by little and little these disappear. A deepening shade takes place; till at last, every emanation of mirth and good nature dying away, all is involved in the gloom of anxiety, suspicion, envy, disgust, and every dreadful passion that lours in the train of Covetousness. I say not, that this always happens; but I ask again, what security is there that it will not happen to you? Did not every gamester in the world, whether male or female, begin just where you do? And is it not probable, that many of that infamous tribe had once as little apprehension as you can have, of proceeding those lengths to which they have since run, through the natural progress of vice, no where more infatuating or more rapid than in this execrable one?

But let us suppose the desire of winning should in you never rise to that rage, which agitates the breast of many a fine lady, discomposes those features, and inflames those eyes, where nothing should be seen but soft illumination. Are there not lower degrees in the thirst of gain, which a liberal mind would ever carefully avoid? And pray consider; when either by superior skill, or what is called better luck, you happen to strip of her money, of that money which it is very possible she can ill spare, an acquaintance, a companion, a friend, one whom you profess at least to love and honour, perhaps at the very moment to entertain with all the sacred rites of hospitality—is there nothing unkind, nothing sordid, in giving way to that which draws after it such consequences? Is this the spirit of friendship or humanity?—Blessed God! how does the passion I condemn deprave the worthiest affections of nature; and how does that bewitching power, the

Fashion of the times, pervert even the best understandings, when resigned to its impostures !

Nor is it the laws of humanity and friendship only, that are transgressed by the lust of gaming. The sweet emotions of love and tenderness between the sexes are often swallowed up by this all-devouring appetite ; an appetite, which perhaps beyond any thing else tends to harden and contract the heart, at the same time that the immoderate indulgence of it excludes a thousand little reciprocations of sentiment and joy, which would serve to kindle and feed the flame of virtuous affection.—How much conversation suffers from it, who does not perceive ?

Here indeed you will tell me with an air of triumph, that it prevents a great deal of scandal. What, then, are your minds so unfurnished, so vacant, that without cards you must necessarily fly to that

that wretched resource? Creation, providence, religion, books, observation, fancy; do these present so narrow a field of entertainment, as to force you on the alternative of preying either on the reputation or on the property of others?—But, now I recollect, while you possess an art of such utility as this last, for filling up the blanks of discourse, as well as for repairing the wastes of extravagance, why should you give yourselves any trouble to read or think, to enlarge your ideas or improve your faculties, beyond the usual standard? Surely the knowledge of the most fashionable games, of the most remarkable characters, of the reigning modes and amusements of the season, with a few common-place compliments, remarks, and matters of fact, but especially some passages of private history, told by way of secret to all the world, is quite sufficient, by the help of a little vivacity which Nature will supply, to accomplish you for every purpose of modern society.—Alas,

how poor is all this ! How unworthy the principal attention of beings made “ but a “ little lower than the angels,” and professing to believe in the communion of saints !

But are there not many general companies, in which it were impossible to spend a long evening with any tolerable ease, or propriety, but by borrowing assistance from the card-table ? I grant it, as things are now ; and, when you are so situated, your complying with the occasion may be both allowable and proper, provided the stakes are but trifling, your tempers not ruffled, and what you win or lose is agreed to be given away in charity. By this means perhaps you may “ make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.”

But tell me, I beseech you, where is the necessity of being very often in general companies ? Are these the scenes of true enjoyment ? What, where the heart

cannot be unfolded; where the understanding has little or no play; where all is reserve, ceremony, show; where the smile of complaisance is frequently put on to deceive, and even the warmest professions of regard are sometimes made the “cloak of malicioufness!”

There is not, methinks, any thing more contemptible, or more to be pitied, than that turn of mind, which finding no entertainment in itself, none at home, none in books, none in rational conversation, nor in the intercourses of real friendship, nor in ingenious works of any kind, is continually seeking to stifle reflexion in a tumult of pleasures, and to divert weariness in a crowd.

‘But can it be supposed, that even in more private meetings people should be always able to pass the time without cards?’ You ought to speak more plainly, and say, to Kill the time; for that is com-

monly the case. By the most favourable reckoning, the greatest part of those hours that are devoted to play is lost. That which was begun for amusement is lengthened out to fatigue. No one improving or generous idea is circulated ; no one happy or solacing recollection is secured. The whole is to be set down as a large portion of the span of life cut off without advantage, and without satisfaction, as far as virtue or reason is concerned.

‘ What then shall we do when together?’ Do ! Why, converse, or hold your tongues, as good sense and unaffected nature prompt to either. Do ! Why, work, read, sing, dance, laugh, and look grave by turns, as occasion serves ; any thing in the world that is innocent, rather than eternal play. For persons in all the gaiety of health, and sprightliness of youth ; persons not relaxed by infirmity, or exhausted by business ; persons with numberless sources of delight laid open to

them, and every natural relish lively and strong—for them to be at a loss how to spend a single evening without cards, what a degradation of the human mind !

Willing to corroborate an argument which to me appears of such importance, I will avail myself of the words of a writer now living, who is not less respectable for the force than for the morality of his pen. Complaining of the fatal passion for play, he mentions, amongst other mischiefs to which it leads, its tendency
“ to destroy all distinctions both of rank
“ and sex ; to crush all emulation, but
“ that of fraud ; to confound the world
“ in a chaos of folly ; to withhold youth
“ from its natural pleasures, deprive wit
“ of its influence, and beauty of its
“ charms ; to extinguish the flames of
“ the lover, as well as of the patriot ;
“ to sink life into a tedious uniformity,
“ and to allow it no other hopes or fears
“ but those of robbing and being robbed.”

He adds, in the same animated style,
“ That if those of your sex who have
“ minds capable of nobler sentiments, will
“ unite in vindication of their pleasures
“ and their prerogatives, they may fix a
“ time at which cards shall cease to be in
“ fashion, or be left only to those who
“ have neither beauty to be loved, nor
“ spirit to be feared; neither knowledge
“ to teach, nor modesty to learn; and
“ who, having passed their youth in vice,
“ are justly condemned to spend their age
“ in folly.”

But I proceed to a more agreeable task,
that of recommending, in the next place,
those ingenious works mentioned a little
while ago.

As to Needle-work in particular, we
find it spoken of in scripture with com-
mendation. Its beauty and advantages are
universally apparent. It was practised by
ladies formerly, and ladies of the first

rank, much more than it is at present. They indeed had much more leisure than most of their posterity. They were simple enough, I suppose, to be in love with home, and to seek their happiness in their duty. Of that duty they considered diligence as a part; nor does it appear to have in the least cramped their imaginations. Of their skill in this way we have seen very laudable monuments. They only wanted instruction in the principles of the Fine Arts, to give their performances a juster taste. At any rate, their time would by such means pass away more pleasantly. They would be under little temptation of wandering abroad; consequently they would escape infinite snares and inconveniencies. Then, too, private conversation would be cultivated on a much more rational footing; and many a pleasing discussion would arise on the subject of their various productions. Their fancies, called forth by a thousand prettinesses, and kept up by the spirit of

elegant emulation, would of course be polished and exalted. This, I believe, will be found true, that those females of the present age, who have resolution enough to copy so antiquated an example, seldom fail to prove the most entertaining companions.

I once knew a lady, noble by her birth, but more noble by her virtues, who never sat idle in company, unless when compelled to it by the punctilio of ceremony, which she took care should happen as rarely as possible. Being a perfect mistress of her needle, and having an excellent taste in that, as in many other things, her manner, whether at home, or abroad with her friends (for friends she had, though a woman of fashion, and bred at court) was to be constantly engaged in working something useful, or something beautiful; at the same time that she assisted in supporting the conversation, with an attention and capacity which I have

never seen exceeded. For the sake of variety and improvement, when in her own house, some one of the company would often read aloud, while she and her female visitants were thus employed. I must add, that during an intimate acquaintance of several years, I do not remember to have seen her once driven to the polite necessity of either winning or losing money at play, and making her guests defray the expence of the entertainment.

Permit me, before I dismiss this article, to offer a hint or two, that may not be unworthy your observation. Instead of that minute and laborious kind of work, which is often practised by young ladies, I should think that slighter and freer patterns would for the most part be greatly preferable. The sight would be in no danger of being strained; much less time would be required to finish them; and, when finished, they would produce a much better ef-

fect. They would give, beyond comparison, more scope to the imagination; they would exhibit an ease, a gracefulness, and a flow that ought to enter, as much as possible, into all works of taste; and as they would admit a far greater multiplicity of ornament, so likewise the purpose of utility would be promoted in a far higher degree.

The business of shading with the needle is now, comparatively, seldom thought of but at school, where it is frequently taught in a paltry, and always in a defective manner, though certainly deserving of particular attention. The disposition, harmony, and melting of colours in this way, afford one of the finest exercises to female genius, and one of the most amusing that can be imagined; beside that such productions are the most permanent.

But the truth is, nothing complete or distinguished in those attempts can be ex-

pected, while the proper foundation is so generally omitted to be laid; I mean Drawing, which is

The third accomplishment I would take the liberty to inculcate. That many more young ladies would be found qualified for such a study than is usually apprehended, I cannot doubt. Several, I am certain, have applied to it with the greatest success and pleasure, who, before they began, did not promise themselves the least. It is truly surprising, that so few of our more intelligent females should show a desire of being instructed in so pleasing an art, at a time too when it is to be learnt with such advantage and encouragement.

None can be ignorant, that the principles and practice of drawing were never understood amongst us to the height they are at present; owing chiefly to the patronage of a society, that reflects the greatest credit on this country, and on

this age. But here justice to your sex demands an acknowledgement which we joyfully make, that several honorary rewards have been most deservedly gained by young ladies of rank and character, for specimens of ingenuity, which it is to be hoped their grand-children will one day mention and emulate with honest pride.

If such of you, my amiable hearers, as are in a situation to try whether Nature has given you talents for this beautiful accomplishment, would fairly make the essay, you might very probably open to yourselves, and to your friends, a spring of entertainment that would never run dry; that would contribute to improve, while it delighted you, by adding to your ideas of elegance and grace; that would prevent many a folly, and many a sin, which proceed from idleness; and, be not hurt if I add, that would prove the means of future support, should it please the Supreme Wisdom to reduce you to a state of dependance.

There are other pretty works, extremely proper for female hands, which I need not specify here, since several of the remarks already made will, I presume, be applicable to them. Let it suffice to say in general, that whatever is genteel, and whatever is useful, in such occupations, should always claim your regard, when you have leisure and capacity. The former you will seldom want, if you have learnt to portion out your time with judgment; and in the latter you ought never to pronounce yourselves defective, before you have honestly tried.

The last accomplishment of the elegant kind, which I shall mention, is Music. This, I conceive, is to be recommended with more discrimination than the rest, how much soever such a notion may contradict the prevailing opinion. It is very true, there are young ladies who, without any particular advantage of a natural ear or good voice, have, by means of cir-

cumstances peculiarly favourable, made great proficiency in music: but it is as true, that they have made it at a vast expence of time and application; such as no woman ought to bestow upon an object, to which she is not carried by the irresistible impulse of genius.

In many other arts it is possible for original talents to lie dormant, till called up by assiduity or accident; but where there is a strong propension to this, it will, I imagine, hardly forbear to burst out, by means of the transcendent pleasure derived from it on all occasions. If it do not, if even the best music can be heard without a degree of delight bordering on transport; either the practice will never reward the pains necessary for acquiring it; or, there being no native vein of excellence in that way, it will, as has been commonly observed, be discontinued on a change of condition; in which case you lose the labour of years, that might have

been directed with lasting benefit into some other channel.

Be this as it may, you will readily allow, that for a young person who has no turn for the study I am speaking of, to be condemned both to mortify herself, and to punish her acquaintance, by murdering every lesson put into her hands, is a very awkward situation, however much her master may, for the sake of his craft, flatter her and her friends; assuring them, perhaps with an air of great solemnity, that he never had a better scholar in his whole life. If she whose attainments in this kind are but indifferent, could be contented to amuse herself, and those of her own family, now and then, with an air that happened to please them, it were well: but how does a judicious hearer blush for the poor beginner, when set down by the command of a fond parent to entertain perhaps a large company, as we have

often seen, with performing that of which she scarce knows the very rudiments; while all is disappointment on their part, and, if she have any understanding, confusion on hers!

Is the preacher then an enemy to music? Much the reverse. Where there is a real genius for it, improved by art, and regulated by sentiment, nothing surely can be more charming, or more affecting. Its importance in the ancient Jewish worship is well known. Of its beauty and usefulness in our churches, when conducted in a manner suitable to its sacred purpose, and not prostituted to levity, or perverted by ostentation, I am not insensible. Its influence in all ages and nations stands universally confessed. It is founded in some of the strongest perceptions of Nature, wherever she has seen fit to confer a lively sensibility to the melody of sounds.

But how much is it to be regretted, that this wonderful charm of melody properly so called, together with the whole merit of expression, should be sacrificed, as we frequently find, to the proud but poor affectation of mere trick and execution; that, instead of rendering the various combinations of sounds a powerful instrument of touching the heart, exciting agreeable emotions, or allaying uneasy sensations, as in the days of old, it should be generally degraded into an idle amusement, devoid of dignity, devoid of meaning, absolutely devoid of any one ingredient that can inspire delightful ideas, or engage unaffected applause! What lover of this enchanting art but must lament, that the most insipid song which can disgrace it is no sooner heard in places of public entertainment, than every young lady who has learnt the common notes, is immediately taught to repeat it in a manner still more insipid; while the most

sublime and interesting compositions, where simplicity and greatness unite, are seldom or never thought of in her case; as if the female mind were incapable of relishing any thing grave, pathetic, or exalted!

Let me here call on every musical spirit of your sex, to assert the rights of good sense; and to insist that those, who are entrusted with this branch of their education, shall not fail to introduce them, as early as possible, into an acquaintance with whatever is most beautiful and noble in the article of melody. The more thorough knowledge of harmony may come afterwards, if you be ambitious of advancing so far. In the mean time you will have the satisfaction of pleasing the best judges, and of entertaining yourselves with such pieces as, while the words to which they are set convey no sentiments but what are ele-

vated or virtuous, shall serve to refine and enliven your thoughts, to raise your spirits into joy, or compose them into sweetness, and on chosen occasions, by the diviner strains of solemn music, to lift your hearts to heaven, prove a kind of prelude to the airs of paradise, and prepare you for joining the choir of angels.

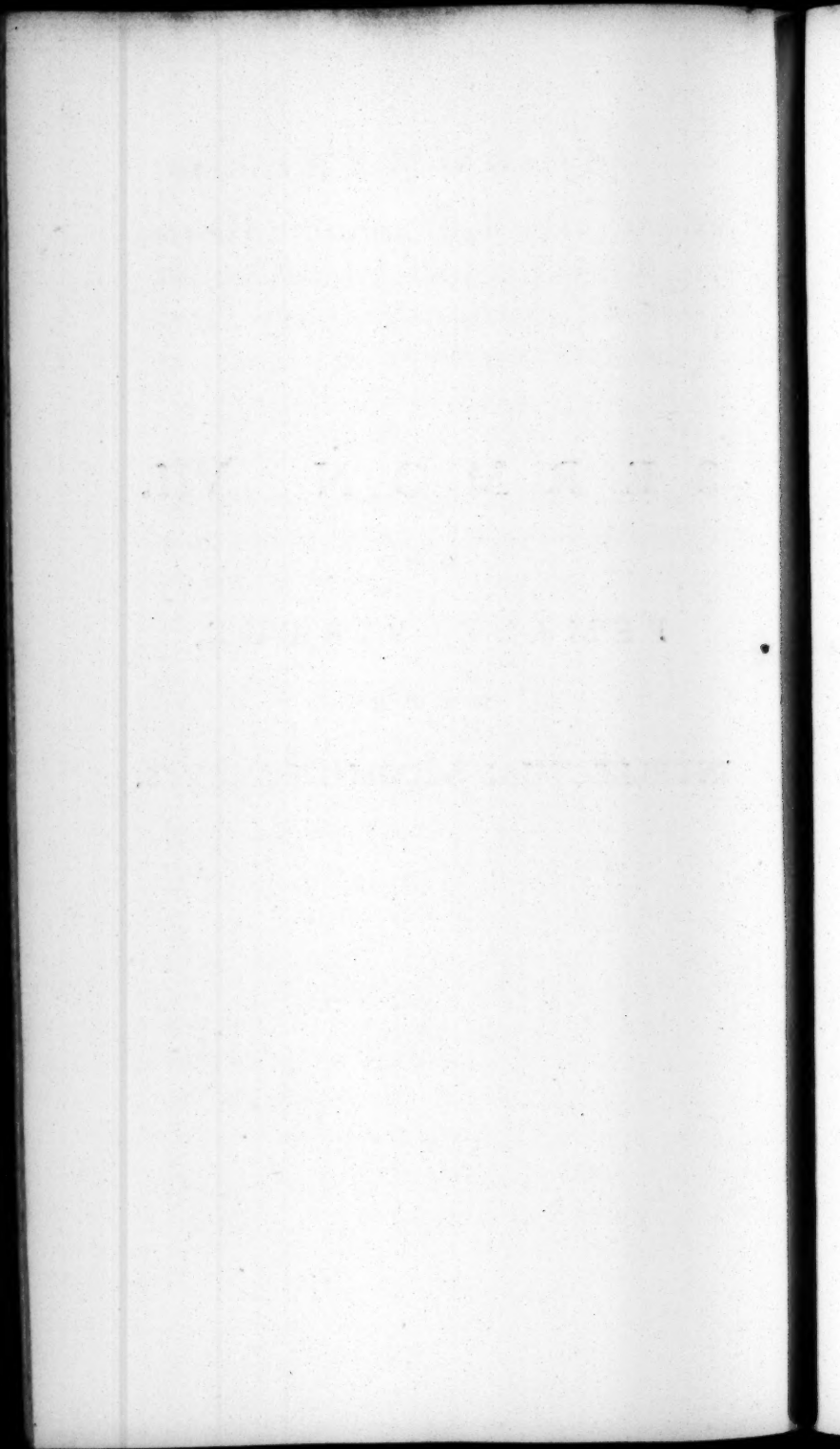
S E R M O N VII.

O N

F E M A L E V I R T U E ,

W I T H

I N T E L L E C T U A L A C C O M P L I S H M E N T S .



S E R M O N VII.

On Female Virtue, with Intellectual Accomplishments.

1. TIM. ii. 8, 9.

I will—that women adorn themselves with Sobriety.

PROV. iv. 5, 6, 8, 9.

Get Wisdom, get Understanding.—Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.—Exalt her, and she shall promote thee.—She shall give to thy head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

IN a country like this, where there is certainly a native fund of good sense, where sciences and arts are widely cultivated, where works of genius and taste in every kind are allowed to abound; is it not somewhat strange, that the com-

mon style of conversation should be so little instructive or entertaining? How seldom do we fall into a company, in which we learn any thing useful, or hear any thing whatever above the rate of the multitude; such as low jests, vulgar conceits, incoherent disputation, or impertinent tattle! How very seldom does a thinking man come away from the visit of an evening, delighted with his manner of spending it! One who has conversed only with a small circle of ingenious friends, will hardly conceive what a frivolous, what a piteous thing, the ordinary strain of company appears to an intelligent by-stander.

The favourite communications of men of pleasure are beyond description corrupt and groveling, with scarce any diversity. Those of gay assemblies are the quintessence of dulness and dissimulation; except only that the first is sometimes tinged with a few sprinklings of smart-

ness, and the last always concealed under the specious colours of civility. As to the busy, the learned, and the grave; the greater part are no sooner released from their respective pursuits, than they throw themselves loose into a listlessness of disposition, that wanders with impatience in quest of public diversion, or diffuses itself in private through the vacuity of idle talk: as if there were no medium between seriousness and folly, or as if people could not find relief from the stretch of application, in the agreeable unbendings of moderate amusement and rational discourse. In short, if we want to find a conversation enlivened with variety and spirit, enlightened by intelligence, and tempered by politeness, we must seek for it amongst a few men who join sentiment to knowledge, and a few women who join knowledge to vivacity.

That the number of these should be so small, compared with the untaught and

the ungoverned Many, is surely matter of lamentation. To what shall we chiefly impute it? To what else, but to that whirl of dissipation, which, like some mighty vortex, has swallowed up in a manner all conditions and characters? That the young indeed should be often carried down the stream, till they sink into insignificance, is not much to be wondered at, how much soever it is to be regretted. But, alas! they do not always stop there. From what is trivial, how easy the transition to what is mean! How quick the descent from thoughtlessness to vice! Nothing, perhaps, requires better sense, or a stricter guard, than to trifle without being foolish, or to be frolicksome without sin. They that would hold fast their righteousness, and not depart from the decorum of their character, cannot be too careful to regulate their conversation, as well as their conduct, by the great law of reflexion, and in the hour of gaiety itself, not to

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lose sight of wisdom. But how should this be expected, where the mind is wholly unimproved, where no internal resources are secured in the days of youth, but all is left to nature neglected by education, and warped by fashion, or to the scanty supplies which company, news, and accidents afford ?

What I would therefore now labour is, with the help of God, to persuade you, my fair auditory, to enrich and adorn your understandings with such attainments, as shall render you not only less dependant on external amusements and empty gratifications, but more superior to every thing corrupting and dangerous ; such as shall entertain and edify you at the same time, enable you to enjoy solitude, and qualify you to shine in conversation even without designing it, to inspire a mixture of complacence and respect, in fine, to unite decency and sense with mirth and joy. Thus would I still en-

deavour to promote that spirit of Christian Sobriety which our apostle inculcates, and by the same means contribute to the felicity and dignity of your sex.

The passage from the Proverbs, which I have read to you, by way of a second text, requires no commentary; and in truth I know not any that could do it justice. As it is, it must strike you at once with its simplicity, tenderness, and sublimity. The Wisdom or Understanding, so beautifully personified by Solomon, is doubtless to be considered chiefly as representing Religion, which is certainly the highest exercise of our rational powers. But I see no reason for conceiving it to represent that only. In many parts of his writings it is manifestly used to signify Mental Improvements, in the proper sense of the phrase; nor is there any thing said of it here, which will not in one degree or another hold true of these, when under right direction; besides, in

fact, the cultivation of those powers to every valuable purpose, is unquestionably a duty which we owe to their author. That the exhortation is addressed by our inspired writer to a male scholar, whom in the manner of eastern teachers he calls his son, makes no essential difference in the spirit of his doctrine, as I hope will appear from the sequel.

The degree of those Intellectual Accomplishments which your sex should aim at, I pretend not to determine. That must depend on the capacities, opportunities, and encouragements, which you severally enjoy. With regard to all these however, this may be said in general, that they are better, and more than many of you seem solicitous to improve.

As to the first indeed, I scruple not to declare my opinion, that Nature appears to have formed the faculties of your sex for the most part with less vigour than

those of ours; observing the same distinction here, as in the more delicate frame of your bodies. Exceptions we readily admit, and such as do the individuals great honour in those particular walks of excellence, wherein they have been distinguished. But you yourselves, I think, will allow that war, commerce, politics, exercises of strength and dexterity, abstract philosophy, and all the abstruser sciences, are most properly the province of men. I am sure those masculine women, that would plead for your sharing any part of this province equally with us, do not understand your true interests. There is an influence, there is an empire which belongs to you, and which I wish you ever to possess: I mean that which has the heart for its object, and is secured by meekness and modesty, by soft attraction and virtuous love.

But now I must add, that your power in this way will receive a large accession

from the culture of your minds, in the more elegant and polished branches of knowledge. When I say so, I would by no means insinuate, that you are not capable of the judicious and the solid, in such proportion as is suited to your destination in life. This, I apprehend, does not require reasoning or accuracy, so much as observation and discernment. Your business chiefly is to read Men, in order to make yourselves agreeable and useful. It is not the argumentative but the sentimental talents, which give you that insight and those openings into the human heart, that lead to your principal ends as Women. Nevertheless, in this study you may derive great assistance from books. Without them, in effect, your progress here will be partial and confined. Neither are you to attach yourselves wholly to this study, important as it is, and grateful as you may find it. Whatever kinds of reading may contribute to

your general improvement and satisfaction, as reasonable beings designed for society, virtue, and religion, will deserve your attentive regard. Suffer me to enter a little into the detail. And

First, I would observe that History, in which I include Biography and Memoirs, ought to employ a considerable share of your leisure. Those pictures which it exhibits, of the passions operating in real life and genuine characters; of virtues to be imitated, and of vices to be shunned; of the effects of both on society and individuals; of the mutability of human affairs; of the conduct of divine providence; of the great consequences that often arise from little events; of the weakness of power, and the wanderings of prudence, in mortal men; with the sudden, unexpected, and frequently unaccountable revolutions, that dash triumphant wickedness, or disappoint presump-

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tuous hope;—the pictures, I say, which History exhibits of all these, have been ever reckoned by the best judges among the richest sources of instruction and entertainment.

On both accounts, we would also recommend books of Voyages and Travels; a favourite study of the celebrated Mr. Locke. How amusing to curiosity! How enlarging to our prospects of mankind! How conducive to cure the contracted prepossessions of national pride, and withal to inspire gratitude for the peculiar blessings bestowed upon our country; to excite on one side pity towards the many millions of human beings left by mysterious heaven in ignorance and barbarity, and to beget on the other admiration of the virtues and abilities displayed by numbers of these under all the disadvantages that tend to darken and overwhelm them.

Here too we would mention Geography, as closely connected with both the former ; as often useful in conversation ; and in which a competent skill may be acquired with little application, but much amusement.

These several studies, to which may be added the principal facts, or great outlines of Astronomy, are beautiful ; and they are improving. Some of them present the most interesting scenes ; all contain the most pleasing discoveries. They open and enlarge the mind ; they dilate and humanize the heart ; they remind us that we are citizens of the universe ; they show us how small the part that we fill in the immense orb of being. Amidst the amplitude of such contemplations, superfluous trifles shrink away ; wealth and grandeur “ hide their diminished heads ;” a generous ambition rises in the thoughtful mind, to approve itself to

the all-inspecting eye of Him to whom none of his works are indifferent, but to whom those only can be acceptable, that, under the uncertainty and imperfection of sublunary things, seek their security, happiness, and glory, in doing well.

Permit me to ask, whence it proceeds that studies like these are neglected by the generality of your sex? Is it because they are not calculated to inflame the fancy, and flatter the passions; or because to relish them to purpose, requires some degree of solidity and judgment?—But did not the preacher say, that there were women who are no way deficient in these latter qualities? He did, and therefore pleases himself with the hope, that the hints now offered may imprint conviction on such, where there has been an omission, and encourage perseverance where there has not.

As to works of imagination, it is allowed on all hands, that the female mind is disposed to be peculiarly fond of them ; and surely when blended with instruction, so as to be rendered more immediately subservient to it, they have a particular claim to your attention. In this view, we must not forget to recommend Fables, Visions, Allegories, and such like compositions, where Fancy sports under the controul of Reason ; Dramatic Writings also, where truth of character and purity of thought are preserved ; (of these last how inconsiderable the number !) Poetry of all kinds, where a strict regard is paid to decorum, but chiefly of the sublimer forms, where Nature, Virtue, Religion, are painted and embellished with all the beauty of a chaste yet elevated imagination.—What a field is here opened within the reach, and adapted to the turn of female faculties ! What a profusion of intellectual ornament is spread before you, for

memory to collect, and for reflexion to work upon ! How many sprightly, delightful, and lofty ideas do here pass before the mental eye, all dressed in the brightest colours ! How strangely inexcusable must those be, who complain at any time of want of amusement, when the genius and invention of every illuminated age have taken such happy pains to supply the noblest !

I say nothing now of Novels and Romances, having had occasion to speak of them so largely in a former discourse. But I must not omit to recommend those admirable productions of the present century, which turn principally on the two great hinges of sentiment and character ; joining description to precept, and presenting in particular the most animated sketches of modern manners, where the likeness is caught warm from life ; while the powers of fancy, wit, and judgment, combine to expose vice and folly, to en-

force reformation, and in short but spirited essays to convey the rules of domestic wisdom and daily conduct. I need not here name the Spectator, or those who have followed him with various success in the same track ; many of them ingenious, some of them masterly writers. How much are both sexes indebted to their elegant pens, for a species of instruction better fitted perhaps than most others of human device, to delight and improve at the same moment ; such is its extent, its diversity, its familiarity, its ease, its playful manner, its immediate reference to scenes and circumstances with which we are every day conversant !

Works of this kind are peculiarly calculated to allure the lively and the gay, who are not yet delivered over to licentiousness. Hardly indeed will girls, for instance, who mean no ill, but whose fancies are all alive and restless, submit to have their understandings attired at Wis-

dom's glass; if lovely forms and smiling images be not often reflected from thence, to detain the eye, and captivate the heart. In reality, none of you, my dear hearers, can be too well acquainted with those approved masters of life, those able teachers of decorum, those singularly successful painters of truth and morality. Let me advise you to dwell on their pictures, to imbibe their sentiments, to replenish your minds with that inexhausted fund of stories and examples which they have furnished. You cannot fail of improving under such tutors. They too will provide you with a touch-stone by which to judge of other writings, and while you are searching "for knowledge" as for hid treasures," to separate between the pure ore and the alloy.

I should not on this occasion do justice to your sex, if I did not say, that such books as those last mentioned are, in a particular degree, proportioned to the scope

of your capacities. Of this I am certain, that amongst women of sense I have discovered an uncommon penetration in what relates to characters, an uncommon dexterity in hitting them off through their several specific distinctions, and even nicer discriminations, together with a race of fancy, and a fund of what may be strictly termed Sentiment, or a pathetic manner of thinking, which I have not so frequently met with in men. It should seem that Nature, by her liberality to the female mind in these respects, has seen fit to compensate what has been judged a defect in point of depth and force; and a real defect, I believe, it is, if estimated absolutely. If estimated with a due regard to the design and formation of the sex, it ought to be considered as no defect at all.

I have already hinted, that to men and women the Almighty has allotted very different provinces, on the filling of which with suitable kinds of ability and excel-

lence depends, under his conduct, the proper perfection and welfare of each. In all I have said therefore, or may yet say, concerning Female Accomplishments, I would be still understood as recommending what is refined in study, and useful in the milder modes of life; not what is profound in the former, or of no material advantage in the latter. This hinders not however, but that those ladies, whom Nature, not confining herself to her customary operations, has endowed with any signal strength of genius, may, if favoured also by their situation, give way to that original bent, by prosecuting severer studies to every prudent length. I say, to every Prudent length. For should they push their application so far as to hurt their more tender health, to hinder those family duties for which the sex are chiefly intended, or to impair those softer graces that give them their highest lustre; nothing, I think, can be more apparent than that, in such cases, they would re-

linquish their just sphere, for one much less amiable, and much less beneficial. But neither from this, nor from what was advanced immediately before, does it follow, that, in what relates to the acquisitions of the mind, women in general may not pursue studies that are solid, as well as entertaining; which leads me to add,

In the next place, that the most obvious branches both of Natural and Moral Philosophy should engage some portion of your time. That they are so seldom, and so slightly thought of, you must allow me to say, is a melancholy reflexion. Does Creation, through her infinitely extended, and infinitely diversified scenery, display innumerable wonders? Have these been traced with skill and accuracy, by many learned, and many laborious hands? Are they laid open to you, and almost pressed upon you, from every quarter? For of Natural Philosophy I consider Natural

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History as a part.—And can ye with a giddy eye turn away from this glorious spectacle, to gaze on the meanest ornament of beauty, or the silliest pageant of vanity; thus poorly, not to say impiously, prostituting that admiration which ought to be consecrated chiefly to the works of your all-perfect Creator?

Are the great and eternal obligations of Conscience, the maxims of a wise and worthy behaviour, the duties you owe to the Supreme of Beings, to your fellow-creatures, and yourselves; the rules necessary for the government of your own minds in particular, or for the management of those that may be hereafter committed to your care; are these mighty considerations, unfolded and enforced as they have been with equal clearness and eloquence by various writers—are these, I say, matters of so little concern with you, that the business of contriving some petty circumstance of dress, or the care of

settling some foolish party of pleasure, shall be preferred in almost every case of competition?

Here, I must confess, it is difficult to repress the risings of indignation. Here I cannot deny, but the feelings of contempt, mixed with those of compassion, are in some danger of banishing the favourable ideas we entertain of your sex, when seen in happier points of light.—For shame, Ladies, let not this reproach rest on you any longer. Hasten to vindicate your reputation from the infamy of impertinence and nonsense. Be ambitious to demonstrate, by the most substantial proofs, that you are capable of better things than the placing of a ribbon, or adjusting an head-dress, than the glittering in an assembly-room, or prattling at a tea-table. Be all ardour to emulate those excellent ones of your sex, who, without affecting to despise any thing that is innocently female, discover in their

conversation among their friends, a mind devoted to wisdom, and ennobled by knowledge.

The duty and advantage of reading the Scriptures, with a few books of the most serious and devotional strain, I will take another occasion to consider.—But, I think, I hear you exclaiming that, though God has given you the capacities of intellectual improvement, men have denied you the Opportunities of it. Let us therefore proceed to examine how this matter stands, which was

Our second point. If your complaint be well founded, you are certainly objects of pity, instead of blame. If the men, jealous of dominion, do really seek to depress the women by keeping them in a state of ignorance, they are surely guilty of equal cruelty and meanness. But though the complaint be a very common one, and very popular with your sex, I

must take the liberty of saying, that it appears to me without any foundation adequate to the bitterness with which it has been made, or to the keenness with which it has been propagated.

That your minds are often much neglected at home, that they are neglected perhaps yet more at many Boarding-schools, we readily admit, and heartily regret. But are you nevertheless desirous of knowledge? Then, what should hinder you from attaining it? Is there any law or statute by which you are prohibited, under severe pains and penalties, to read or to think, if you be so minded? Books you have, or may have, on every subject that is proper for you. This is not a country where these are scarce; where Friendship, if permitted, will not supply, or where Benevolence, if asked, will not lend them. You will be pleased to remember too, that the price of one expensive gown, or of one shining toy, will at any time

furnish a little library of the best authors. Nor does it appear, that you are at a loss to find as many plays and novels as the most insatiable avidity can devour. But in fact there are few young ladies, who are not tolerably provided with books useful as well as amusing; and in those who are not under the necessity of earning their bread, it is both an idle and unthankful pretence, to plead that they want either opportunity or leisure for any one study befitting their sex.

Not to speak of the time that with so much propriety they might, and that, for so many reasons, they ought to redeem from endless visitings and other follies; what is there to prevent their reading alternately to one another, when custom or conveniency engages them at work together? Such an exercise would not only enlarge the stock of ideas in each individual, but also present materials on which their minds might operate, with an

energy quickened by mutual exertion. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the face of a woman her friend." You, my fair pupils, cannot be offended, that to suit the quotation to the argument, I should here read Woman for Man. How smoothly have I seen those hours steal away, which were thus employed in a little ring of intelligent females, all sweetly solicitous to improve and be improved by each other !

By this means too may be acquired a very valuable and pleasing accomplishment, that of reading well ; and to this cause, I presume, it is to be ascribed, at least in part, that there are not a few women who possess it in no contemptible degree, and that there are some who read delightfully. It is likewise probably, in some measure, owing to that fine feeling of nature and of sentiment, which may be supposed to result from the delicacy of their organs. If, in the exercise I speak

of, they are often deficient where force and vehemence are requisite, to that very delicacy it is obvious to impute it; and also perhaps to their running too commonly into a monotony, which their teachers have not taken sufficient pains to correct.

Having touched on this head, I will take leave to remark by the way, that nothing, as I apprehend, can be more erroneous than to begin the study of what may be termed the Art of Reading, with poetry chiefly. For by the flow and harmony of the numbers, a learner is carried insensibly into the repetition of those musical tones, that chance to seize the ear with particular delight; from which the voice, once got into the same strain, cannot without a struggle persuade itself to break away: a principal source of the evil of monotony, where it has not been contracted by bad example, and where the sense of an author is understood or

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attended to. Where it is not, the proper emphasis cannot be expected.

Now to prevent or remedy this prevailing evil, the most likely method, I conceive, would be to begin with frequently reading aloud those productions in prose of which the style is plain and easy, such as unadorned Narrative, short Stories, Familiar Epistles; but principally those that approach nearest to the language of conversation, such as Dialogues, and the best Dramatic Writings; mixing for a considerable time nothing that is versified, and endeavouring to support the voice with firmness and simplicity, till you have formed a habit of so doing. Then by slow and almost imperceptible progression, you should advance to what is more varied, rhetorical, and raised; such as Allegories, Orations, Moral and Religious Discourses, and Essays of the pathetic kind, together with the most beautiful and elevated parts of Holy Writ;

keeping to these, till your voice has acquired flexibility, expression, and energy. After repeated and patient efforts in this way, you may proceed with success to reading and reciting pieces of poetry, in different styles; setting out with those where there is least, and rising gradually to those where there is most of the tender, the impassioned, and the sublime. Need I add, that all this should be practised in the frequent hearing, and under the kind animadversion, of an experienced judge?

But perhaps you think the practice too laborious and troublesome. Do ye? Go, thou trifler, and be ashamed of thy folly.—To neglect the study of thy native English, the skilful use of which, joined to sentiment and knowledge, would render thy conversation charming; and yet contentedly to puzzle thy silly head with learning a little imperfect French, which it is a hundred to one if ever thou shalt

have occasion to use—how preposterous and futile ! To the language last named I am no enemy : I only blame its occupying so large a place in the female education of this country. For women of rank the fashion has made it necessary. But what can be more ridiculous than to see our city girls, not excepting the daughters of plain tradesmen and honest mechanics, taught for years together, at great expence, a smattering of that which soon after they leave the Boarding-school is generally forgotten ; while they are left ignorant of the superior beauties and just pronounciation of their mother-tongue ?

I mentioned the exercise of Reciting verses. With relation to this, I would only say, that I do not wish a young woman to indulge it in any company, that is not very private and chosen indeed ; how much soever it is to be desired, that she should store her memory

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with some of the most select sentiments, and striking descriptions, from the best writers both in verse and prose.

On this last particular I am led to observe, that, for a disengaged hour, there can be few occupations of greater entertainment or utility, than that of imprinting on the mind those passages from any good author, which happen to please and affect more than ordinary; either by repeating them often at the time, till they are got by heart, or by writing them down, or sometimes by doing both. The advantages of such a practice are sufficiently apparent. Would it be one of the least, think ye, that the attention of her who was thus employed, would be often turned from viewing and admiring her person or dress in the mirror, to the contemplation of Truth and Virtue, and fixing their fair and venerable image in her soul?

Beside the several opportunities of mental culture now enumerated, I must not forget to add, that in all probability there are few young women who are not, or who may not be, acquainted with some persons of both sexes, endowed alike with worth and capacity, that would take the highest pleasure, by their conversation and counsel, to aid them in the pursuit of knowledge; which brings me to consider,

In the last place, your complaints of want of Encouragement to that pursuit. Who are they then that seek to discourage you? I have read of foolish mothers, that would not suffer their daughters to read, lest they should dim the lustre of their eyes, or spoil the bloom of their complexions. But I have never met with one, that seriously carried her folly so far. On the other hand, I have known parents not a few, who, though they had no taste for knowledge themselves,

would yet speak with the utmost satisfaction of a girl that was fond of her books.

But perhaps my little friend is afraid, lest the men should suspect her of being what the world styles in derision a Learned Lady. Indeed? Is this then a character so very easily acquired, that you are in danger of it the moment you emerge from the depth of ignorance, and begin to think and speak like a reasonable being? You are over hasty in your apprehension. A Learned Lady is by no means a creature that we run the risk of being often shocked with. For my own part, I have never strictly speaking seen such a one; and when at any time I have met with what approached to that character, I must profess, I found nothing to excite terror. But possibly you mean a smatterer in learning. There, indeed, I join with you in wishing you may never incur the imputation.

That men are frightened at Female pedantry, is very certain. A woman that affects to dispute, to decide, to dictate on every subject; that watches or makes opportunities of throwing out scraps of literature, or shreds of philosophy, in every company; that engrosses the conversation, as if she alone were qualified to entertain; that betrays, in short, a boundless intemperance of tongue, together with an inextinguishable passion for shining by the splendor of her supposed talents; such a woman is truly insufferable. At first, perhaps, she may be considered merely as an object of ridicule; but she soon grows into an object of aversion. Be assured however that, where a character so unnatural appears, it is not the effect of too much knowledge, but of too little. The deep river flows on with a noble stillness, while the shallow stream runs babbling along. Suspicious of her own deficiency, the Pedant we describe suspects lest you should discover it; but in-

stead of learning caution from that consciousness, she strives to dazzle you with the little she does know: Or else, what is more probable, elated with that which to her circumscribed view appears great, she cannot restrain herself from displaying it on all occasions; when farther progress, and higher ground, would have taught her modesty, by showing her immense regions of truth yet untravelled, of which she had no conception before.

In fact, we find that the best scholars of either sex are the least ostentatious. It will ever be so, where erudition is accompanied with judgment, and matured by reflexion. Take care to preserve sober sense, and unassuming manners: far from giving disgust by literary attainments to any person whose regard is of moment, you will give pleasure to every thinking man and woman of your acquaintance. I am even inclined to believe that, when in conversation you claim no kind

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of pre-eminence, but instead of pretending to teach are willing to learn, instead of courting applause are ready to confer it, instead of proudly directing are content quietly to follow the current of discourse, every creature living will be delighted with your deportment, will listen with attention, and even deference, to one who has thus learnt, that the noblest improvement of superior knowledge is superior humility.

Now and then indeed there may be an invidious female, who cannot bear to see herself outdone. But that is a circumstance, which will only add to your exaltation; while every one else will be tempted, for the sake of mortifying her, to pay the more respect to you. Be this as it may, the notion that letters are apt to generate self-conceit, because it cannot be denied that the abuse of them has often done so, will in those of the least candour or discernment serve to heighten esteem

for her, who considers an excellent understanding as only next in value to an excellent temper. If on any occasion it should happen, that the foolish or the worthless of one sex, or of the other, are prejudiced against a young woman for discovering, though without parade, a cultivated mind, what then? Is not the single plaudit of a real judge sufficient to outweigh a whole theatre of others?

But you will ask, Do we not often see handsome idiots complimented and caressed by those men from whom better things might be expected; while the most accomplished women in the same company shall be over-looked, if destitute of personal charms? The fact cannot be disguised, and far be it from me to justify such partiality. There is in beauty a magic, which certainly does enchant for a time the generality of beholders: But this will by no means excuse the injustice of neglecting merit in those who want that

advantage. Let it be remembered however, that the triumph of their rivals is commonly, like that of the wicked, short. The spell on which it is founded is soon broke. Men at least of any significance, are seldom long in recovering their senses. The admiration raised by "a set of features, or the tincture of a skin," is often by the witlessness of the possessor thrown down in an instant. The witchcraft of a fair outside is always dispelled by familiarity. Nothing can detain affection or fix esteem, but that kind of beauty which depends not on flesh and blood. The least degree of understanding will be disgusted at petulance, caprice, or nonsense, even in the fairest form. External allurements are continually losing; internal attractions are continually gaining. A beautiful character "is
"as the morning light, that shineth more
"and more unto the perfect day." Sense, spirit, sweetness, are immortal. All beside "withers like the grass." The

power of a face to please, or indeed to displease, is diminished every time it is seen. When appetite does not predominate, and appetite cannot predominate always, the soul will seek a soul; it will refuse to be satisfied with any thing less. If it find none, in vain shall the brightest eye sparkle, in vain shall the softest smile entice. But if a mind appear, and, wherever it resides, a mind will appear, it is recognized, admired, and embraced; even though the eye should possess no lustre, and smiles should at the moment be banished by sorrow.

“ Mind, mind alone, bear witness earth and
heaven,

“ The living fountain in itself contains

“ Of beauteous and sublime! Here hand in
hand

“ Sit paramount the Graces——”

I cannot conclude this discourse, without taking so fair an opportunity of addressing myself to such of the men as, by

directing their praises of young women wholly or chiefly to an outward appearance, turn the attention and solicitude of the little idols so strongly that way, as often to occasion the neglect of those inward perfections which can alone give them value. Have you forgotten, Sirs, that what they see you admire, and hear you applaud, they will be induced to think most worthy of admiration and applause; and that on it of course they will bestow their whole or their chief care? If you, who ought to assist their judgments, and animate their resolutions, in what relates to the conduct of life, be accustomed to pay your main homage to their persons, their persons they likewise will adore. Beauty with them will constitute Merit; and every other endowment will be employed as a handmaid to dress that, if not as a pandar to sell it. Accordingly I fear, that to your score must be charged many errors of the sex, often less justly imputed to them. Those errors, I am sure,

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it would become you to prevent, or to correct at the source, by pointing out to them what, in your wiser hours, you want and wish them to be; and what, when they are, will not fail to captivate love, to command veneration, and to add permanence to both.

Consider, I beseech you, how honourable it will be for you, instead of corrupting the fair, to mend them; instead of perverting their ideas, to lead their taste to knowledge and elegance, to worth and delicacy, to humility and meekness; things, which in your inmost souls you cannot but prize, whenever you meet with them in an amiable woman, and of which you are secretly convinced the absence cannot be compensated by any advantages of form or feature, any decorations of fashion or show. How much nobler the power to save, than the power to destroy! How much sweeter the praise

of being esteemed men of virtue and sentiment, the friends and patrons of the sex, advocates for their true interest, and zealous to promote it, than that of being looked upon as smooth-tongued courtiers, or good-natured triflers ! To flatter a giddy girl into good humour, or even tenderness, by telling her perpetually how handsome or how fine she is, requires no capacity. Every empty fellow, every frivolous dangler, every wretch of a parasite can do the same. But to engage the esteem of a woman of principle and discernment, to preserve that esteem, and even to insure in her breast a silent testimony, that you have contributed to establish this principle, and to improve this discernment—is triumph indeed ! Those coxcombs that in truth make no distinction, but yet would persuade every young thing, they see, that her face, her shape, her dress, her air, surpass those of all her sex ; and after throwing her into

ecstasies of self-complacence go away and laugh to their companions—are a detestable race.

Concerning many of you, my friends, I hope better things. Nor do I mean by aught I have said, rigidly to preclude every degree of compliment in conversation with the fair sex. I am for commending with moderation, what is commendable; for acknowledging with prudence, what is pleasing. Young minds ought to be encouraged. In every young mind there is something good. An agreeable appearance is certainly engaging. Truth will never deny it: courtesy will readily own it. But then under the shelter of kind approbation, salutary counsel may be admitted. Wisdom may be found a welcome guest, when introduced by affection—I was going to say, that vanity may be successfully turned against itself. But why should the love of honest praise be deemed vanity? Even tell your female

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friends, that you do esteem them for whatever in their characters is estimable. Tell them without exaggeration, but generously at the same time, what that is. Describe with complacence the qualities and accomplishments, which you have ever held most truly attractive, which it is in their power to acquire, and which it will be their glory to possess. If they have beauty, be not afraid to add how alluring it appears, when illuminated by sense, and arrayed by virtue. If they have none, remind them freely that sense and virtue have often borne away the palm from the finest figure that ever Flattery deified, if destitute of those living and lasting graces.

END OF VOLUME I.

